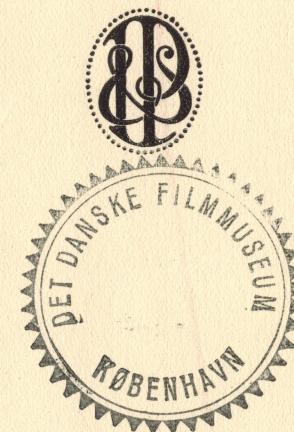


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# HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE

BY  
ARTHUR L. GALE



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## SPECIAL NOTE

Although the continuity and scenario principles presented in this book are basically the same as those that are used in professional, theatrical studios in Hollywood, this discussion has been prepared for the non theatrical movie maker—the amateur who makes movies as a hobby and recreation and the producer of business, scientific, educational and other practical types of films.

Hollywood studios rarely buy scenarios or unpublished stories direct from writers or their agents. Outside of the stories and scenarios especially written by the staff writers of the studios, less than one half of one per cent of a year's supply of material is purchased direct from authors before previous publication. It follows that the best way to sell a story to the theatrical studios is first to sell it to a magazine or to a book publisher. As far as the writer without considerable successful experience is concerned, it is safe to say that *this is the only way*.

Naturally, a story, intended ultimately for the movies, but offered to magazine editors and publishers as a means to that end, must stand on its own merits as entertaining fiction. This puts a dual burden on authors who write with one eye on the publisher's editor and the other on the movie screen. Nevertheless, many successful authors do exactly this. An understanding of the fundamentals of continuity and film treatment, that are presented in this book, should aid new writers who have in mind a motion picture production of their story as the ultimate goal. However, anybody reading this book with that end in view should remember that his most important job is to write a story that will sell to a publisher.

This book will not help anybody to sell an unpublished story or scenario to Hollywood studios.—A.L.G.



## FOREWORD

Writing a movie is not manhandling literature.

The extraordinary demand of the world for more and more photoplays on theatrical screens and the inexperience of most story tellers with the technical problems of movie writing have forced photoplay producers to the clumsy expedient of tailoring the fabric of literature into what too often have been poor cinematic dresses for first rate art.

This temporary compromise is only a jerry built halfway house on the road to creative expression through the medium of the movies. It is a part of the fit and try experiment going on in the work of personal filmlers and studio producers. Notwithstanding all the speed and competence modern men can bring to the execution of what they want to accomplish, there is still a plaguing deliberateness in art. Canons, techniques and "schools" come after artistic creation; they do not give it birth. Art seems to meander into being.

Who would write a movie should give some thought to the form of the movie's art. Many persons are still so confused by the product of theatrical photoplay makers that they can see no art or possibility of art in the illusion of the screen. They cannot see what will be because of what is. What will be



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—or, at least, what might be—is worthy of honest speculative attention.

When Mark Twain's Pauper used the Great Seal of England to crack nuts, the reality of that tool lay not in its momentary application but in its potential capacity. What it could do, and not what it then did, was its essence. That motion picture art is presently catalogued by its widest known expression in movie theatres does not exclude more varied possibilities. These depend upon what its inherent powers can do.

Everybody knows that movies are photographic, two dimensional and illusory, that they can, and most frequently do, present dramatic action and that they have the aid of color and sound. Other art forms are two dimensional, illusory and colorful; other arts make use of sound. This proves, then, that movies are nothing more than an artistic hodge-podge, that they are derivative, second hand and synthetic. Esthetically, they are claptrap.

But not so fast, says the Devil's advocate. Granted that the Great Seal can crack nuts but that a hammer would do the job better, granted that Sarah Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth* was startling but that the great lady in *Phèdre* was sublime, granted that the sea episodes in *Mutiny on the Bounty* were arresting but that there is grandeur in Turner's seascapes, what other art can do these five things?

What can present, at will, a recreation of actual

## FOREWORD

motion, beyond the confines of the proscenium arch or pageant field?

What can enable an audience to come close to the most minute motion and then to swing its attention to distant action?

What can merge the end of one scene into the beginning of another, when these are separated both in time and space?

What can let an audience see action from many viewpoints, looking up at it, down upon it, from the front of it and from its back?

What can present to the beholder, at his will, a recreation of action recorded without the actors' knowledge?

But, says somebody, these are all mechanical. Where is the inspiration, the frenzy, the austerity, the sublimity of Art? Bernhardt was a mistress of the mechanical, and her clear, sonorous, rapid speech, her postures and movements were the result of hours of mechanical invention and experiment. Turner knew the chemistry of pigments and the mechanics of brushes. A great artist is also a great technician. The inspiration, the frenzy, the austerity and the sublimity are expressed by disciplined tools, never out of the artist's control.

Movie making is creative expression employing its own tools and borrowing generously from other arts. The seven older ones, likewise, are jackdaws, for



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were not statues painted, are not buildings adorned with murals, does not the drama make use of poetry? Esthetics are pretty much lend and borrow.

Writing a movie is a problem chiefly because writers will not give themselves the trouble to search out the essentials of screen expression. They imagine that they are dealing with fiction, with drama, with pantomime or with painting, and when techniques appropriate to these forms of expression do not give them what is needed for filming, they walk out in a huff. They have been told that a mysterious something called "continuity" is essential to turn out a "script" or "scenario," and they treat continuity as if it were a biscuit cutter, applying it to the dough of their story, their drama, their pantomime or their stage design. Both dough and biscuit cutter must be appropriate to the motion picture. They cannot be common material for all arts.

In this book, Mr. Gale deals with the technique of a separate art. He does not discuss literature nor drama, but movies, and he assumes that the reader will not make the mistake of trying to square this new technique with that of other arts, because such lost effort would be obstructive. Writing a movie is not preparing an architectural plan to which all technique is referred and which must govern every later situation. It is, rather, providing the framework upon which, necessarily, the movie must rest

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but the covering of which will be subject to many modifications, as the filming is done.

Making a movie is, in a way, an experiment in democracy, because it is a cooperative enterprise calling for adjustment, compromise and the successful meeting of minds and situations. Circumstance will alter almost every cinematic case. If older arts produced dictators and autocrats, this newest of them has no place for the one inflexible will. Can art come from such a kind of esthetic town meeting and can we imagine Goethe or Molière accepting such shackles? Would Shakespeare let the Globe Theatre modify Hamlet to meet practical necessities? From what we know of them, they did just these things in their own times and, if they were writing a movie today, they would probably accept the technical requirements without question, master them and then create the kind of scenarios that all of us, who believe that the eighth art calls out for genius, know will be written some day by somebody.

ROY W. WINTON, ACL.



## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

THE amateur movie maker or the student of motion pictures who has mastered the technique of cinematography is likely to feel that the subject matter—whatever it may be—can take care of itself. He will have done his part when he has put it on film with the proper exposure, focus and lighting. In the great studios where all work is highly specialized, this may be true, but, in the case of the amateur movie maker and the individual, free lance cinematographer, this is decidedly not true. Even in the largest studios, cameramen have a fair knowledge of the principles of the treatment of motion picture subject matter and some of them have a splendid background in this important side of cinematography. The imaginative cameramen, who have developed the whole body of motion picture technique and are in part responsible for this great medium of today, made each improvement with a thorough knowledge of the fundamental principles of telling a story on film. When one reflects on this, the logic at once appears. After all, motion picture technique is not an end in itself—every film is made for an *audience* and for the purpose of entertaining, informing, instructing or convincing that audience.



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Hence, in the end, it is the *subject matter* of a film that is most important. A perfectly exposed and perfectly developed shot of a purposeless scene is just as purposeless on the screen, for all the world's wisdom of photographic technique that may have gone into its filming. On the other hand, cleverness of treatment has covered up many an indifferent job of photography and continues to mean the success or failure of a picture.

At first glance, it might seem that the answer suggested by this reasoning would be to photograph only highly important and dramatic subject matter—only things that are bound to “wow” audiences and leave them breathlessly impressed. Yet, no photoplay is made up of a climax for every scene and no animal picture is composed entirely of boa constrictors strangling tigers. These things are the highlights of a picture; they are not the common stuff of all films. In fact, scenes of the last chapter of a murder mystery in a photoplay or shots of the winner breaking the tape in a sports film would lose half or more of their punch without the preparatory material that builds up the incident and creates suspense.

The answer lies deeper than this. The best way to approach it is to clear one's mind of any previous concepts and to study the motion picture as a *story telling medium*, using the word *story* in its broadest sense to mean any sort of connected narrative—from the story of how to can beans to unfolding a fairly

## WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

elaborate plot and counter plot. It is safe to say that every motion picture must tell a story; if it tells its story well, it is a good motion picture, and if it tells it with confusion and the consequent lack of understanding by the audience, it is a poor motion picture. The word *story* cannot be emphasized enough, for the sooner one begins to think in terms of motion picture stories, the sooner he will make interesting and vital motion pictures. The story may present Baby's first walk, the picnic at Jones Beach, the fire at the wharves or a drama, but short or long, simple or complex, it will be a story with a beginning and an end.

The technique of telling a story in motion pictures is called continuity. This simple word has proved more of a stumbling block to new movie makers than it should. Actually, it refers only to the fact that motion picture scenes are spliced one after another continuously and are so shown on the screen. A list of scenes to be spliced one after the other in succession is called a continuity. In short, continuity is simply the order in which scenes are to be shown. However, if the scenes are to be shown, they previously must have been made, and so continuity also refers to a list of scenes to be filmed.

Although the meaning of the word is simple and although the principle behind it is not complicated, don't be confused as to the importance of both. The order of motion picture scenes is all important.



## HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE

Whether we like it or not, so that they may be projected, motion picture scenes will be spliced together one after another. They cannot be shown separately with any convenience, nor would one want to do so. Consequently, that order must have meaning. If it does not, we have a hopeless hodgepodge, a jumble that cannot interest or inform anybody. For example, if a shot of the Empire State Building is followed by one or two scenes of a hunting trip and then by a closeup of Mother working in the garden, more hunting trip and more Empire State Building and these scenes appear one after the other on the screen, confusion is bound to result. Such a film would have no *continuity*. It would tell no story and it would bewilder its audience. However, if all the shots of the hunting trip were spliced together and all the scenes of the gardening followed one after another, some relationship, order or *continuity* would be obtained. The example is ridiculous, but it does illustrate the fundamental point and, ridiculous or not, it is regrettably true that many new movie makers bewilder their audiences with just such jumbles as this.

One who has made movies might point out that the grievous jumble just cited could have been cured on the splicing block. By editing, it would be possible to shift the scenes around so that the shots of the garden were all together and the scenes of the hunting trip all followed one another. Isn't then

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continuity purely a matter of editing? The answer is no, as many a movie maker, professional and amateur, has learned to his sorrow when he has started to work with material that could not be filmed again. Editing is necessary, surely, and with it one can give the finer touches to any continuity but *editing cannot produce scenes that don't exist!* If, in the shots of the hunting trip, there were no scenes of the game that was bagged, no amount of editing would produce them, and the *continuity* or the *story* would not be complete. The end would be lacking and the projectionist would have to finish screening that picture by remarking lamely, "We got three deer, but they weren't photographed!" Something would be missing in the order of the scenes and the story would not be complete, even if the shots that did exist were spliced together with the greatest thought and care so as to produce the best impression.

This introduces continuity's twin and ever present companion—*planning*. By planning the continuity in advance, the nimrod cinematographer would have saved his picture and turned it into an interesting and vital story. He did give the material what order and continuity he could with the existing scenes but, had he planned the continuity or order in advance, he would not have missed some of the most important action. Careful editing can accomplish marvels, but it cannot do as much as planning plus editing.



## HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE

Planning a continuity is an expression frequently used in all types of movie making. It means planning the arrangement and the subject matter of the scenes in advance of filming, in order to tell some sort of coherent, logical story that will be intelligible to the picture's future audiences. Remembering that the purpose of the motion picture is to tell a story, this should be very clear. In short, planning the continuity of a motion picture is simply outlining its story. Instead of doing it in words, as in writing, one does it in terms of scenes. Hence, in the end, one simply lists the scenes that he intends to make so that he may present a coherent, understandable story to his audience. When the scenes are written down on paper, they are referred to as a *scenario*. All that is meant by this word, which frightens many, is a list of scenes.

More frequently, in amateur movie making or in free lance cinematography, the list of scenes is not written down—it is worked out in the cameraman's mind to guide him as he films. He may jot down a few notes to guide him, but in order to film a clear and entertaining picture, it is by no means imperative that he will have prepared a complete and elaborate list of every shot to be filmed. It is only in photography and certain types of industrial filming that this becomes absolutely necessary. Experienced cameramen, practiced in thinking in motion picture terms, can plan almost as they go along, for they can visual-

## WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

ize the completed picture as it takes form in their cameras. But the quickest way for the new movie maker or the student to reach this stage is to work out the whole film carefully in advance. Then, on the ground, he may modify to some extent, as the accident of circumstances might dictate. However, he will never approach the camera without some scheme or continuity in mind. That would be like starting to talk without knowing what words your tongue was about to utter. Very embarrassing, it might be.

The nature of the continuity plan for a picture will naturally depend upon its theme—the subject of its story, in other words. It may seem a rather pedantic waste of words to make this point; of course, anybody would determine a picture's theme before he started to make it, just as he would decide what he was going to write about before he writes it! However, amateur movie makers have inherited a wasteful principle from still photography—snapshooting—and, although a professional would never expose film until he has decided some theme or purpose for his picture, a private movie maker not infrequently will do so because the spirit moves him. Of course, some material filmed on the spur of the moment and of any subject that happened to be at hand may prove of value in later editing, but much of it will not. Then, if one never has selected a theme for any picture, all his material is bound to be of the hodgepodge variety.



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The theme of a picture may be anything, simple or complex. It may be the sidewalks of New York, a motor trip through the Poconos, tarpon fishing in Florida or a presentation of Canadian scenery. But, whatever it is, a theme should exist. The cleverness of many an amateur picture has been dampened by the uncertainty of the producer as to exactly what his theme was. The roving cameraman filmed things that caught his fancy and did not remove extraneous shots in editing because he had not realized the value of unity of purpose in movies as well as in every other field of expression.

When a movie maker has determined upon a theme for a picture, the procedure of planning it for best results is greatly simplified. He knows that the film will be composed of scenes and, accordingly, he can list the scenes that he would like to get to make the ideal picture of his subject. In short, scenes become his building blocks wherewith to erect a structure. However, anybody who has seen a movie, professional or amateur, will recognize that there are different kinds of scenes; some of them are distant, while others are made with the camera comparatively close. In still others, the camera has been moved, as on a pivot, so that a panorama results, or the camera has been tilted either upward or downward.

All these differences depend upon the position or the treatment of the camera and, for the sake of con-

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venience, they have been given names which roughly indicate the position of the camera when they are being filmed. The terms come down to us from the time when the movie was little more than a photograph of a stage play, and consequently they are based upon stage conditions and are only rough approximations. First, there is the *closeup*, which refers to a shot made close enough to a human subject so that only his head and shoulders are included in the frame. Next, there is the *semi closeup* or *close shot*, which is a scene including the subject to about the hips. Two or even three people can be included in such a scene, since they are shown only from about the waist up. Then there is the *medium shot*, which in the old days was simply a full view of the stage showing the background set and all the characters of the play in action. It may be defined as a shot which would include a full length view of a person with a little room to spare beneath his feet and above his head. Finally, there is the *long shot*, a distant view which would show a horseback rider clearly enough so that the audience would know that he is riding a horse, but not enough so that they could recognize his features. The *semi long shot* is a compromise between the *long shot* and the *medium shot*. These terms, coming from the early photoplays, are obviously only rough approximations of *distance* of the camera from the subject being filmed. However, they are very useful even in scenic, sport or indus-



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trial filming because, by using them, one may work out a picture plan more intelligently and in greater detail.

The terms, closeup, medium shot, long shot, etc., all indicate the field of the camera's view. They are not absolutes and, in dealing with pictures such as hunting films, newsreels or travel films, they are only indications of the effect intended. A closeup of an elephant and a closeup of a baby would hardly be the same thing in actual measurement from camera to subject. Yet, the principle would remain the same, for the closeup of the baby would show his face filling the frame, just as would the closeup of the elephant. The terms themselves have no arbitrary meaning—they simply indicate where the cameraman will stand in relation to the subject. A simple and easy rule for good picture making is *to get as close to the subject as possible without eliminating any significant portion of it*. Thus, if one wanted to show the whole of the Place de la Concorde, he would probably use what might be called a semi long shot. If he wanted to show the relative size of two trout, he would use a closeup. If it were desirable to show a family at the breakfast table, a medium shot would be in order. A closeup could not give an impression of the Place de la Concorde; in a medium shot, the comparison in the size of the trout would be lost, while a long shot would be neither practicable nor informative in the case of the scene

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of the family breakfast. Native intelligence can serve as anybody's guide in determining the distance of the camera from the subject.

The closer the camera is placed to the subject, the more clearly detail will be shown on the screen and, at the same time, the greater the amount of possible area will be excluded. At the same time, the further the camera is placed from the subject, the less the detail that can be seen on the screen and the greater the area covered. Consequently, closeups are used to show details and long shots to show backgrounds. Here is an approximate guide of the purposes served by the various camera distances:

1. Closeup. To show details, to focus attention on something, to show a character's expression.
2. Semi closeup. To show detail, but to give some of the background, to focus attention, but not so closely as in a closeup. To show the expression of two persons, as in a conversation.  
(or close)
3. Medium shot. To give the whole view of the subject and to show its background. (This is a working camera distance, used most commonly.)
4. Semi long shot. To show the whole subject and to place it in relation to other things,



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to establish relationship of the subject with its general background.

5. Long shot. Serving the same purpose as a semi long shot but offering a broader field.

In the average amateur movie maker's work, and indeed in that of many free lance professional cameramen, there are not enough closeups or pictures of details. One tends to forget that he may focus his eyes on a certain phase of the subject of his gaze, but that the camera will record all that is in its field, willy nilly. Consequently, in planning films, it is well to be conscious of the value of details—of closeups—and to plan to include them.

These variations in camera distance have another value in addition to enabling the cameraman to tell his story more forcefully and clearly; they also add to the variety of the picture. A film made consistently from the same camera viewpoint would be monotonous and tiresome. The members of the audience would want to see some things more closely and would want to see the backgrounds of other things. They might see the baby in his mother's arms and wonder what he really looks like and they might see a house and wonder what its surroundings were like. The audience is powerless to get closer or farther away from the scene unless the cameraman has done

## WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

this for it. In real life, one may shift his gaze, may even walk closer or turn his head, but, on the screen, the cameraman must have done this for him. Clever planning of a film will satisfy the curiosity of an audience and will not imbue it with the restless wish that it could have been present to have seen it for itself or worse—that the picture would get itself over somehow. The art of keeping an audience interested lies in using these variations of camera positions intelligently in telling a story of some kind.

There is another variation, almost as important as the camera distance, and that is variation in camera viewpoint, or angle. Not only can the camera be moved closer or farther away as the case may indicate, but it may also be pointed downward, upward, at right angles to the subject or from as many angles as there may be divisions on the compass. Again, as in the camera distances, the camera angle has no real significance in itself—it all depends upon the subject matter and how it is desired to present it. If one is filming a parade, a downward angle may show its length as it comes down the street and, if one is filming a tall building, an upward angle will show its height. But like the variation in camera distance, the variation in camera angle will help to give the picture interest from sheer relief of monotony, if nothing else.

Upon the camera angle depends the composition of the picture. Very often, a slight change in camera



## HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE

viewpoint will mean the difference between a distinguished scene and the humdrum average type of work. This will be discussed later and, for the present, simply an indication of change in camera viewpoint will suffice as one of the tools of film planning.

It is a very simple matter to use these tools, once one begins thinking in terms of them. For example, suppose that a movie maker were planning a short film episode of Baby's first ride out of doors. The incident might be outlined in movie terms something as follows:

1. Medium shot of Mother putting Baby into the carriage which has been placed on the walk in front of the house.
2. Closeup of Baby lying in the carriage, smiling at the camera.
3. Closeup of Mother's hands as she adjusts the blankets and carefully tucks them in.
4. Medium shot of Mother as she finishes and takes the handles of the carriage and gradually pushes it out of the scene.
5. Semi long shot of Mother wheeling the carriage down a tree shaded street away from the camera.

Here is a coherent and understandable movie episode. The medium shot would establish the background of the incident, namely that Baby was being taken for a ride in the open air. The closeup showed Baby's appearance and pleasure at the trip and the

## WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

closeup of the hands gave a human detail that would add to the interest. The medium shot of Mother wheeling the carriage past the open gate carried on the story and showed the general nature of the excursion.

The same technique holds good on radically different subject matter. For example, there follow short scene plans for three other types of subject matter.

### A. SPORTS EPISODE

1. Medium shot of a diver climbing the tower.
2. Semi closeup of the diver walking toward the end of the board (made from the rear).
3. Semi long shot of the diver as he dives off the board and hits the water below. (Made from the side.)
4. Semi closeup of the water near the edge of the pool as the diver swims into the scene and climbs out of the water.
5. Medium shot as the diver walks toward the board again.

### B. SCENIC EPISODE

1. Long shot of winding road with a car coming toward the camera in the distance.
2. Medium shot of the car coming into the scene and slowing down.
3. Medium shot of the car (from another angle) as



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it stops and the driver gets out, pauses and looks at the scene.

4. Semi closeup of the driver who is looking off in the distance with an expression of pleasure on his face.
5. Long shot of the view as the driver sees it—a distant scene of mountains framed with trees in the foreground.
6. Medium shot of the driver who is still looking at the view. He seats himself on the running board and takes out his pipe, still absorbed in the natural beauty.

### C. NEWSREEL EPISODE—A FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

1. Long shot of the parade coming down the street toward the camera.
2. Medium shot of the first division of the parade turning a corner and coming toward the camera.
3. Semi closeup of the drum major whirling his stick.
4. Medium shot of the band.
5. Medium shot of the parade passing the camera at an oblique angle.
6. Semi long shot of the parade on the street, made from above.

Note how, in these short examples, the variation in camera distance helps to tell the story. Variations

## WHAT IS CONTINUITY?

in camera angle (or viewpoint other than distance) are mentioned too, but only when these are important in getting across the subject matter, as in the case of the shot of the diver made from the side of the pool and the scene of the parade made from above.

Study these scene lists (we could call them scenarios) and write some of your own.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CINEMA'S TOOLS

A SERIES of scenes, such as those listed in the film episodes in the preceding chapter, are called, for the sake of convenience, *sequences*. If, in motion picture structure, the scene is thought of as comparable to the sentence in writing, the sequence would be comparable to a paragraph, although it is not marked off as a unit in any way as is the written paragraph. Roughly speaking, a sequence can be considered as a series of scenes concerning one general subject. Thus, in a scenic picture, after scenes of meadows and rolling hills, there might come a series of shots of a river, including views up the stream, of the banks and of trees overhanging the water. The series of shots of the river would be called a sequence—a film “paragraph” dealing with the river.

Although the word “sequence” is a loose term, the principle is a very important one, for it is very rare indeed that it is desirable to use but one scene of a given general subject. A picture composed of one scene for each subject would be like a story composed of one sentence paragraphs; the final result in a picture would be just as nervous and broken as it would be in writing. The sequence is the super building block to be used in producing a picture,

### THE CINEMA'S TOOLS

and when one is planning a non dramatic film, after the general theme has been chosen, the next step is to work out the sequences—or blocks of series of scenes.

A common rule to guide one in planning sequences for personal, travel or industrial films is to go from the general to the particular—first to state the general situation and then to show details. In terms of movies, one would first present a semi long or a medium shot and then would follow with nearer scenes of the subject and finally with closeups of details. For example, in picturing Sonny playing with a new wagon, the cameraman would first take a semi long shot of Sonny coasting toward him. This would be followed by a medium shot of the boy coming into the camera field at an oblique angle and then by a semi closeup of his happy face. These three scenes would, first, introduce the subject, second, give the audience a closer view of it and, third, show the most important detail—Sonny's reaction to the new toy. There might be other near and closeup views of details, and the whole episode could be ended with another medium shot, or perhaps a semi long shot in which Sonny coasts away from the camera. This would provide a pleasant, and yet definite, end for the subject. Similarly, in an industrial picture, a new sequence of a canning machine might be opened with a medium shot of the machine in operation with its attendant looking on. A semi closeup



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would show some important detail in the operation of the machine and a closeup would show the hands of the worker making an adjustment, while another medium shot would close the presentation of this particular machine.

This "going from the general to the particular" is a serviceable method of treatment, and a movie maker will find it very helpful to use it from time to time. However, obviously, one would not want to treat every subdivision of the picture in exactly the same way. Not infrequently it will be desirable to begin a new subject with a closeup (which, showing little, will stimulate curiosity) and then, by means of longer shots, to reveal more of the action. Standardization of technique would ruin any film, but this "general to particular" makes possible very clear and plain motion picture exposition when some new scene or activity is being presented, as in a travel or industrial reel.

The movie maker who trains himself to think in terms of sequences has acquired the most useful of all accomplishments in motion picture planning. It is not always possible to follow the theoretically ideal method of making a complete blue print of a film in advance of photographing it, yet, if the subject—no matter what it is—is treated in sequences, a presentable, even outstanding, picture can be produced on the editing table. Hence, it is important, even vital, that free lance cameramen and news

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photographers be able to think in terms of sequences. In those cases, and in the case of most amateur travel and vacation filming, it is impractical—perhaps impossible—to plan a picture thoroughly in advance. However, if the cameraman captures material for a sequence, an interesting picture can be made. But, if he does not think of the needs of a sequence and omits, let us say, taking the closeup of the prize winning baby float, he has lost half his picture.

Some people have what is called picture sense; when this phrase is applied to movie photography, it usually means the ability to work out interesting sequences when photographing on the spur of the moment.

In silent films, and in pictures post synchronized with music—as are many of the best professional travel pictures—the subtitle is an important aid in telling the story. In dramatic pictures, it is the invaluable means of presenting spoken conversation and, in other types of films, it is almost equally important in recording facts and registering ideas that could not be introduced otherwise. The essential purpose of the movie title constitutes an acknowledgement of a fault in the medium itself, for the title exists to do what the movie cannot do for itself. Much can be presented in pictures but certain ideas can be presented most efficiently in words. Thus, while the motion picture can show the impressive grandeur of a mountain, it cannot give statistics as to



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its height in feet or meters. While a motion picture can show the glory of the baby's smile as can no other medium, it will not incidentally register his age unless a title or similar device is used.

In addition to this most practical service of supplying facts that could not be recorded in pictures, the title also serves the function of providing for editorial comment. With the title, the movie maker can point up a scene—emphasize some significant element of it or direct audience attention to some aspect, humorous or serious. In the form of the “wise cracks” of the professional scenic or short subject, this editorial comment is very familiar to us. It is plain how these remarks, often extraneous, enhance the pleasure of the picture.

Fine title writing is an art, and it is difficult to reduce writing effective or clever title wordings to rote and rule. Yet, there are a few warnings and rules which, if observed, will enable a movie maker to improve rather than damage his films with titles.

- (1) *Write titles in an impersonal, expository style.* Avoid the personal pronouns in all except intimate family films and records. Instead of writing: *I believe that you will find marlin fishing thrilling*, write: *The thrill of fighting a marlin is unforgettable.*
- (2) Don't make the audience conscious of the camera or the man behind it. The audience should

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be able to relive the experience on the screen without being hampered by the mechanics of the motion picture. Hence such titles as, *The cameraman would like to join the fun too, if he could*, are almost downright discourteous. The attention of the audience is focused on the man behind the camera to the exclusion of enjoyment of the picture, whatever it is.

- (3) Don't “tip off” your audience as to what is coming next on the screen. For example, don't write such titles as, *Junior mows the lawn reluctantly*. That will tell the audience exactly what they are about to see and will destroy half the potential interest in the following scene. Instead, use a title, such as *Junior needs exercise, but he would rather take it on the tennis court*. The audience, then, will not know exactly what to expect and curiosity will be stimulated. This increases the interest in the scene to come rather than letting it down.
- (4) Don't write lengthy, expository titles or list statistics unless these are absolutely necessary, as in a scientific film. The population of towns, automobile mileages, depth of rivers and other similar facts are rarely entertaining in motion picture films. Scroll titles are tiresome, and continuous reading of a lengthy, unfolding title fatigues the eyes. The new movie maker will discover in himself a tendency to substitute titles



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for motion picture scenes and may want to write titles to take the place of the pictures that he didn't get. It can't be done—at least not satisfactorily. One can bridge gaps or jumps in the film's continuity with expertly written titles, but descriptions of scenes that are not present in the film are bound to bore even a patient audience.

- (5) Restrict the average title to about twenty words—fewer is generally better, except in the case of introductory or prologue titles in which the atmosphere of an entire picture is being presented.
- (6) Punctuate titles just as you would any other form of English composition. Unpunctuated titles, especially spoken titles without quotation marks, are very peculiar, even laughable.
- (7) If you film the title wordings yourself, allow one second for each word. This rule is variable and, in the case of shorter titles, less footage may be allowed. Another method of timing titles is to read the wording through slowly twice while the camera is running. Then, when the title is ready to be spliced in, the footage can be shortened if desired.

Although it is best to postpone writing titles until after the film is completed and is being edited, sometimes it is desirable to work out the title roughly in one's mind before taking the sequence. A sequence of skiing might be titled as follows:

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Title: *Down they come on wings of ash*

1. Semi long shot of a group of skiers coming down a steep hill toward the camera.
2. Medium shot of skiers coming toward the camera and swinging to one side to pass by it.
3. Medium shot of skiers gliding away from the camera down the hillside.

Title: *This makes the pulse beat faster!*

4. Medium shot of skiers coming into camera field and taking a jump at an oblique angle, one after another.
5. Near shot from below as skiers sail past.
6. Semi long shot of the group on a gentler slope of the hill.

Titles such as these are planned to stimulate the interest of the audience, to give additional meaning to the pictures themselves and to provide pauses in the flow of action. Continuous pellmell action, such as that which might be presented in a film of skiing, is actually tiring to the eye and a strain on the attention; titles give a welcome break in the succession of rapid events, even though the picture be accompanied by sound or dialog. This is a lesson that the producers of theatrical shorts learned early in the game. Hence, many of the best scenic shorts are titled and, for the greater part, the sound accompaniment is music alone.

In the several examples of sequences and con-



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tinuity treatments given previously, there have been no particular instructions about the beginning or the ending of the scenes. It has been taken for granted that one shot is spliced directly to another. This treatment, the simplest and most useful method of connecting two scenes, is known as the "cut." There are, however, a number of other devices that add to the flexibility in movie making, usable or not, depending upon the skill of the cameraman and the range of his equipment. These are the iris, the fade, the dissolve and the wipe. Made familiar to all by professional movies and now possible with amateur movie equipment, these devices are too frequently considered simply as ornaments to be hung on a picture much like the tinsel balls on a Christmas tree.

Actually, these cinematic devices are important tools in telling a story through the motion pictures and each one, properly used, will accomplish a concise purpose. The cameraman, whether he be amateur, working purely for the fun of it, or a free lance professional, will find these aids very valuable and the understanding of them desirable knowledge. They serve exactly the same purposes in talkies as in silent motion pictures and are very useful in dialog sequences or pictures with lecture accompaniments.

While the *cut* is a simple break in subject matter, an immediate shift from one thing to another, the *fade out* indicates an air of finality or an element of

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demarcation. Thus a fade out is used to end a picture and, within a picture, to end a lengthy sequence or to separate one section of the story from another. The sequence of scenes of skiing described above might have been ended with a fade out to signal the end of this particular subject. A *fade in* might then announce another type of sport—say ice skating. The whole skiing episode might be represented as the armchair dream of a chap longing for winter sports. A fade out of the chap in a reverie would be followed by a fade in of the first of the skiing scenes. The last scene would fade out, and then would come a fade in on another scene of the chap day dreaming. The fades would clearly bracket off the day dream.

The *iris in* and *iris out* are considered today to be rather old fashioned and have no great value as story telling aids. However, it is sometimes useful to iris out on some particular portion of a given scene, thus focusing audience attention on it. This might be particularly helpful in picturing some important operation or process in a film designed for propaganda or educational purposes, because to iris out on a given part of the subject does make it stand out prominently in the memory.

The *dissolve*, a simultaneous fading in of one scene and fading out of another is more versatile than the fade in or fade out, for it carries with it a stronger sense of connection between the two scenes that are linked by its use. One sequence may dissolve



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into another sequence without giving the strong feeling of separation which is produced by the fade. Thus, it would be better to dissolve from the sequence of skiing to the sequence of skating, rather than to fade, because the subjects are, after all, fairly closely connected. Were the shift to be made from, say, skiing to baseball, then the fade might be preferable.

So definite is the feeling of "connectiveness" given by the dissolve that it is permissible to dissolve from a long shot to a medium shot of the same subject. Moving camera shots may be dissolved in stationary shots, and vice versa. However, the principal use of the dissolve is to indicate a shift in time or place in a story. For example, in a photoplay, one might dissolve from a scene of the hero examining an invitation to a dance to a shot of him dancing at the party. The dissolve neatly bridges the gap of both time and place and enables one to leave out the unimportant, in between scenes without a feeling of incompleteness or abruptness. Similarly, in a dramatic treatment of a criminal suspect being grilled by detectives, a shot of the first part of the questioning might dissolve into a scene of the disheveled suspect seated in the same chair, but presumably taken after hours of the third degree. Here the dissolve bridges a gap in time only.

The dissolve is very useful in industrial and scientific pictures, for with it one can elide unnecessary

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and confusing operations to feature the important ones. For instance, in a study of a milk condensory, one could dissolve from a sequence of the operation of the vacuum pans to one of the canning machinery. In short, the dissolve bridges gaps and yet connects one subject or action to another subject or action. The dissolve is decorative and pleasant, and there is always the danger that the scenic or personal photographer may use it too extensively. The dissolve is not a substitute for the cut, and one must remember that, if it occurs too often in a given picture, its effectiveness will be destroyed.

While *wipeoffs* are produced in professional work, as a rule, in the laboratory by means of trick printing, the free lance cameraman or the amateur may do his own developing and printing, and one can always make a simple wipeoff by the cellulose tape process.<sup>1</sup> The wipeoff gives the strongest feeling of association between the preceding and following scenes of any of the connective devices other than the simple cut. It is very wide in application, for, if done with traveling masks, it may take any form—a lozenge, a circle, a straight scene displacement or a diagonal scene displacement. On the other hand, it is very obvious in its total effect on the screen and

<sup>1</sup> Note: How to produce these effects is out of the scope of this discussion, but it is worth noting the simple method of producing a wipeoff with cellulose tape, discovered by Frederick G. Beach, Technical Consultant of the Amateur Cinema League, Inc., and described in *Movie Makers*, Vol. IX, Page 540.



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readily becomes tiresome. It is most useful in picturing a rapid series of changes or shifts in scene; the excited rush of a reporter to carry a scoop to his paper could be presented effectively in a series of scenes, each wiping off into the succeeding one. A chain of wipeoffs involves a feeling of breathless drama and excitement, useful in a crook story or a chase sequence but strong meat in a scenic or travel short.

A diagonal or straight wipeoff can be produced with one advanced 16mm. camera and there is available an accessory device which will create this type of wipeoff when it is used in conjunction with certain other 16mm. models.

Although the *panorama* and the *tilt* are not devices with which to end one scene or connect it to another, they are common—certainly too common—elements of movie technique. The panorama, the shot produced by swinging the camera on a pivot, is very helpful in following the action at the race track or the rodeo, but it is not so pleasant in presenting a piece of landscape. In the latter case, the panorama may represent simply an unintelligent attempt to get everything in sight down on film. "What a magnificent view!" thinks the movie maker and then he proceeds to swoop his camera over the landscape, forgetful of the fact that the resultant scene on the screen will dance dizzily across, registering neither scenic beauty nor charming vista but recording only the er-

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ratic movements of the camera. To learn how to make a good panorama, one must first learn how not to "panoram" at all. One must discover how to plan a sequence that will present in ordered and restful fashion the beauty, the mountains, building or meadows, that the hasty panorama will obscure. Whenever one is tempted to "panoram," he should then and there attempt to figure out a sequence that would present the subject better than could the panorama. A long shot, followed by a couple of medium shots, will probably use less actual footage and yet will give the audience a chance really to see and appreciate whatever is to be shown to it.

If, after studying the scene carefully (and never haphazardly), one decides to present the subject by means of a panorama, then pivot the camera extremely slowly from one point of interest to another. Pause at the beginning of the scene and at the end. In a scenic film, for example, begin the panorama with a clump of trees and "panoram" very slowly and steadily to, say, a hill. Then pause, with the camera running, and take a few feet of the hill. The pause at the beginning and end of the panorama provides one with a satisfactory basis on which to splice the preceding and following scene. Otherwise, the motion of the camera seems to carry one into another subject, with the haphazardness of sliding into another dimension. It is a particularly unpleasant exit from this world, if there are strong vertical lines



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in the scene. It is in picturing action and in following a character or moving element, such as an animal or car, that the panorama has its practical value. One must be sure to use a tripod in order to pivot the camera steadily and evenly and one must be certain that the action is centered. Otherwise, it is probably better to forego the scene.

The *tilt* is simply swinging the camera vertically upon a pivot as the panorama is swinging it horizontally. While the tilt is capable of as much abuse as the panorama, fortunately there are fewer things on which to tilt. It is in making a study of a big city, such as New York or Chicago, that the movie maker is most inclined to use this effect. An upward tilt once or twice in such a picture will have real dramatic worth if it is done slowly and steadily and if there is a stationary pause at the beginning and the end of the camera movement. However, if the film is composed of a series of nervous swoops up and down skyscrapers, the picture will be valueless from any viewpoint. A slow, steady, upward tilt of a graceful piece of architecture, such as Number One Wall Street in New York City, ending with a stationary view of the top of the skyscraper wreathed in clouds, is very impressive, but beware of obstructions and strong, crossing lines in tilting upward on less modern buildings.

These are the rudiments, the familiar story telling tools, of both the silent and the talking motion pic-

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ture. To understand them and to be able to visualize them in a motion picture plan is to have the most solid base in script writing or motion picture continuity work. To the able amateur movie maker these elements must become the commonplace building units with which he constructs his pictures. To study the effect of these devices in professional and amateur pictures and to note carefully how they are used is to acquire a most serviceable knowledge for all movie planning.

Movie makers who have studied the theatrical screen will know that this by no means represents a complete list of motion picture effects or tricks. However, after analysis, one will discover that these cinema devices, together with the moving or trucking camera, *montage* and a few less frequently used effects, which will be discussed later, are the cinematographic instruments through which the continuity writer can achieve screen effects that will tell his story with greater effectiveness or conciseness. These are the mechanics of the screen which he will want to use as facilities when he plans a picture. The devices that have been discussed up to this point are those which are practicable in scenic, travel and amateur filming in general. Others of these cinema tools are suitable only in filming where a greater degree of control is possible, as in photoplay or industrial work.

On the other hand, there are a great number of



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technical tricks and methods of producing illusions on the screen that are used by the well equipped technicians or theatrical studios to make shots that would be prohibitively expensive or impossible by ordinary methods of photography. In short, tricks in this category are essentially not tools that the scenarist or continuity writer uses in planning the picture; rather, they are short cuts and money savers in production.

For example, miniature sets often are constructed and filmed at close range to give the illusion of a life size location, and thus much money may be saved in set building. By double exposure, miniature backgrounds are combined with human actors. And, by the rear projection of a motion picture image on a translucent screen in the background of a set, actors can remain in the studio but apparently will be filmed in whatever location—from the wilds of Africa to the streets of New York—that may be desired. The lighting in the foreground is handled carefully so that it will not interfere with the motion picture image in the background.

Rear projection is commonly used to provide a moving, realistic background for scenes of people riding in automobiles, that in reality are stationary. Shots of models can be made to appear life size, or larger, in relation to the scenes of human beings that are combined with them. Thus, the monster in *King Kong* was really a small toy.

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The ingenuity of the studio technicians has gone further and produced such amazing illusions as those in *Invisible Man*. However, few of these elaborate tricks are possible to the amateur or the non theatrical industrial filmer. In any case, they are given no consideration in planning a movie except as the answer to the question whether or not a certain difficult scene could be produced on the screen.

We are concerned with those cinematic aids with which the original creator of the film can control the pictorial and audible representation of thought and emotions on the screen.

One can learn a great deal with pencil and paper and without the expenditure of a single foot of film. Think through simple, commonplace incidents that could be filmed readily and write out the short scenario episodes on paper. Involve all the elements that have been discussed and think over the script, checking it against similar treatments that you have seen on the screen. If you have a good memory, there is no law against transcribing a short series of scenes that you have seen in a theatre. Write them out as you remember them and study the written version in comparison with your memory of the visual effect on the screen. There is nothing mysterious about continuity or scenarios, and one can learn readily from the examples shown at theatres on every hand.



### CHAPTER III

#### SHORT SUBJECTS

**G**RANTED that the new movie maker has become acquainted with sequences and has learned to recognize their serviceability in presenting a coherent and smooth flowing picture, he still may be in considerable doubt as to how to treat his subject matter as a whole. Carrying the literary parallel further, he will recognize that magazine articles have a theme and that stories have plots; even a grade school essay has an ostensible purpose, be it "How I Spent Thanksgiving" or "A Trip to the Zoo." What is sought is a thread upon which to string the sequences—a continuous, interest sustaining element that will lead the audience along as it views the picture and which even will entice the audience's anticipation. Sequences, even though well constructed and planned, will not do that unless there is some relationship between them. The desired element is called a *continuity theme* in the case of the non dramatic film, a *plot* in the case of the photoplay. The means of formulating it are as numerous as the channels of human imagination. The very abundance of potential motion picture treatments is bewildering.

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Suppose that a movie maker, at a lake for the summer, wants to film a canoe trip and is desirous of making it as entertaining as possible—assume that the picture is to serve the dual purpose of a personal record of the trip and entertainment for friends in the city next fall. Where, he may ask himself, shall he begin? His problem is like that of the White Rabbit who was advised by the King of Hearts to begin at the beginning and to go on to the end. The King of Hearts would have been a sound continuity writer, but, had that peremptory and rather self-satisfied monarch been a better pedagogue, he might have told the White Rabbit how to discover the elusive beginning.

In this case, the beginning might be considered the point where the day by day routine of the summer home left off and the interesting preparations for the special trip start. Accordingly, the picture could open with a sequence of preparations for the trip, closeups of packing the duffel and medium shots of loading the canoe. Then would come the start of the trip, with a sequence of consulting the map, the final shoving off and scenes of the summer home growing more distant. The rest of the picture would follow the King of Hearts' advice completely, and there would be presented sequences of the trip in succession, as they were encountered up to its end. When the canoeists reach their goal, in accordance



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with the King's pithy formula, the picture would stop, although some do him one better and trace the same ground backward, to return home again.

Briefly dubbed "from here to there," this method of treatment is not particularly inspired, but it has much to recommend it. Through it, a logical, coherent picture can be produced readily, and the clever treatment of individual sequences and the interest of the subject matter will make up for much that might be lacking in the imaginative quality of the continuity idea. In preparing such a picture, one should consider three elements—the beginning, the middle action and the end. If there can be any development of interest, so much the better. Thus, if the audience can, through titling, be encouraged to speculate on what the canoeists are going to find at the end of the trip, the final scenes will partake of the nature of a climax and the whole will have much greater interest. Suppose, for example, that, in addition to following this simple formula, the purpose of the trip could be announced as an effort to see some of the moose that have been reported to feed on the upper reaches of the stream. Then, the question is propounded: will they see the moose or won't they? By clever development of the middle part of the picture, this curiosity can be stimulated and increased until, when the final *dénouement*—the sequence of the moose—comes, audience interest will be very keen indeed. Material so developed has twice the

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value that it would have without this setting. If moose are not available, then use some other element of doubt: will they have a spill or won't they? Is the goal as beautiful as reported or isn't it? There are many elements that can be introduced to provide the slender ingredient of suspense that will do so much to enliven this type of continuity.

Obviously, it is better not to show the complete cycle and register the return home. The pictures of the return would recapitulate the previous material and the audience would know exactly what is coming. Home is the final goal and the audience already has seen that. Stop at the climax of the picture—the arrival at the end of the trip—and make this end as exciting as possible, even if the method amounts only to saving the most beautiful and impressive shots until the end.

In filming such a picture, husband film carefully, saving it for the most interesting action. It is not important, or even desirable, to show everything in the routine of the trip. However, when action full of drama and excitement does occur, such as taking the rapids, make the most of it, even if getting the shots entails climbing on the bank and filming the companion who stages the show in the canoe.

This "here to there" treatment is common in post-synchronized lecture films, because the presentation of events in the logical succession in which they occurred makes possible a concise lecture accompani-



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ment that can be written readily after the film has been made. It is also the basic treatment for industrial pictures, especially those that present factory processes or steps in manufacture. The chain of events, from raw product to finished article, is the continuity motif in such a picture, and the presentation can be crystal clear even if it is a bit lacking in imagination. Hence, when the subject matter permits, this treatment is especially advisable for teaching films or industrial training pictures. In both cases, the treatment will be found readily adaptable to the later addition of a lecture, should this be desired.

Another fundamental continuity motif for motion pictures is based upon time—the sequence of hours or days, as the case may be. The routine of college life may be presented readily by depicting a student getting up in the morning and by following him through the day, showing class and campus activities as they occur. Closeups of clocks could punctuate such a picture, emphasizing the time motif, or scenes of breakfast, lunch and dinner might serve the same purpose. Such pictures as *A Day at College*, *A Day at the Boys' Camp* or *A Day at the Lake* provide very workable methods of showing a great deal of a place in a relatively small amount of footage. The method is greatly favored by those who make pictures of boys' and girls' camps, since, by means of it, the camp routine can be presented clearly for the pleas-

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ure of past campers and for the information of parents. The only drawbacks to the method are its frequent use in certain types of subjects and its lack of dramatic ending. There is likely to be little development of curiosity in the middle action of the picture and no real climax, no matter how glorious a sunset or campfire scene is appended at the end. Such a difficulty could be corrected by introducing a subsidiary continuity element—a disagreement between two campers or the question of whether or not the college student will make the ball team. Another way of adding variety is to subdue the time element as the motif, although still retaining it, and to emphasize only opening and closing time factors, such as morning and evening.

The time treatment can be extended into a period of months for some subjects. Around the year in the garden would be an excellent motif for a scenic picture, especially one in color. This film, starting with spring, could present several sequences of each of the four seasons, ending with winter and the promise of spring again.

For travel films, a third type of treatment, similar to the preceding two, is relatively common—following the itinerary of the trip. The picture begins with the travelers leaving home and boarding the liner. Then come sequences of deck activities and landing. After this follow sequences of cities and villages visited, each presented in the order of the trip. Not



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infrequently, such a picture is accompanied with a map. The same advantages and disadvantages apply to this continuity treatment as the previous examples—it has been done frequently and it offers little opportunity for imaginative handling. However, if the itinerary is kept in the background, one may still obtain very pleasant—and certainly coherent—results with this method. It is still much used in professional travel pictures and is ideally suited to a lecture accompaniment.

More imaginative is the technique of comparing and contrasting the subject matter of the picture. For example, in a travel picture, one could compare how water is used in one country with how it is handled in another; methods of transportation of different countries could be compared and contrasted. In an American scenic picture, winter in the north could be contrasted with winter in the south or life on a western ranch could be compared with life in the metropolis. Such themes lend themselves to interest provoking titles or talks, and the potential field is enormous. Nothing is so interesting as the strange equivalent of the commonplace things that happen in our own lives day by day. A man who eats in a crowded New York restaurant is always interested in seeing how a meal is served on a southern plantation, while the western rancher will be greatly entertained by the picture of the dining habits of the New York business man. Comparison and contrast,

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as a theme, allow the movie maker to take full advantage of this human fascination. For example, a picture could be made on transportation in the United States—not a serious industrial study but a series of sequences comparing the different methods of getting from one place to another that are simultaneously found in this country. New York subways could be contrasted directly with broncos in New Mexico, the cable cars of Market Street in San Francisco with a man on snowshoes in the north woods. Thousands of other similar themes are possible, many of which would make first rate pictures of real theatrical value. The technique of comparison and contrast lends itself very well to sports subjects; one player can be compared with another, one type of sport can be contrasted with a second and a single element can be traced through several varying types of athletics. Strength might be announced as the subject of the picture, and the strength required for football could be compared to that required by boxing, wrestling and swimming. The titles would emphasize the quality of strength in each instance and the picture would indirectly compare and contrast that element. Here the titles would carry the burden of the continuity motif and would “point up” the elements in the picture that were featured by the theme.

It is very easy to produce a dramatic development in such pictures and to stimulate audience interest.



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The comparisons can become more and more marked and then an unexpected twist may be introduced at the end. For example, in the sport picture based on the comparison of strength required in different athletics, after showing a series of increasingly arduous activities, the title, *Though strength counts for much in most sports, agility is even more important in others*, followed by an active rally at ping pong would most certainly bring a chuckle.

The episodic continuity treatment, the newsreel and film magazine technique, has been made familiar to all by the professional newsreels, silent and talkie. A surprising number of subjects lend themselves to this easy type of handling. The amateur movie maker can treat many family and personal pictures in this way; the *Backyard Newsreel* is a practicable continuity. In such films, the construction of the individual sequences counts for everything. If the sequences which make up the independent sections of the film are well planned and complete, the film will be understandable and interesting. Such a picture, whether amateur and private or theatrical and for public screenings, must be relatively short because there is no *development* of interest from episode to episode. No matter how interesting and well presented may be the section about gliders, it doesn't contribute to the section about football or the strange appearance of horseshoe crabs. Titles in this class of film should be imper-

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sonal and written in the third person, whether the picture is private or not. If the family newsreel presents Bobby's birthday party, it should do so just as would a professional news picture. Episodes should be separated clearly from one another so that the wide variation in subject does not cause confusion. It is noteworthy that talkie newsreels have retained for the most part the title heads that separated subject divisions in the silent ones.

The film magazine is closely akin to the newsreel proper, the only difference being that the film magazine does not treat necessarily of current or nearly current happenings and the episodes are longer. This type of short subject was, at one time, fairly popular in professional theatres. It still has excellent possibilities for amateur work. While such films may be planned in advance with profit, they may also be edited from a library of stock shots. Each section should be clearly and coherently presented with a definite beginning and end, even though there is not sufficient footage for any type of plot development.

Of all the categories of continuity treatments, the one with the greatest potentiality is that which we will call the *imaginative treatment*. Under this heading would come all those films having a dramatic treatment that is not of the general photoplay type. The theme of one film might be the power of the sea. Such a picture could begin with sequences of a peaceful ocean, after which would come studies of a



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brewing storm, ending with sequences of the storm itself. A shot of the sea, placid once more, would wind up the picture. Here it is possible to introduce more feeling and greater interest in either title or spoken narrative than is the case in most of the continuity treatments mentioned previously. Pictures may be given even more interest of a dramatic nature by the opposition of one element against another and the introduction of a question as to what will happen. In a sea scenic, the war between the coast line and the ocean could be developed as a theme. The waves beating against sand and cliffs could be personalized as the attacking force, while the dunes and rocks are the resisting army. There are countless such subjects in nature, which offer entertaining subject matter for the amateur movie maker or the free lance professional. What happens when the wind fights the trees, when the canoeist battles the rapids or when the prairie hen protects its nest, all are possible subjects of pictures. Note that in each of these topics a question is posed and one element is placed in opposition to another. Here we have the rudiments of fundamental plot treatment and consequently the greatest chance of gripping the attention of the audience. There is always the question, "What will happen?" to incite interest and awaken curiosity. In industrial filming, this type of treatment may become very similar to a photoplay. The story may deal with the housewife who is discouraged

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about some domestic problem. She sees in the newspaper an advertisement of a product that should solve her problem; she buys it and tries it out, with great success. Or perhaps the treatment may run something like this: George questions the efficiency of one brand of razor blade; Jack dares him to try it; George refuses (won't be convinced) but finally Jack inveigles him to do it and George is astonished at the results.

Throughout all these treatments, one can trace the opposition of two different elements with the introduction of doubt as to the outcome. One element may be anything from the ocean to the reluctant George and the other element may be anything from the sands on the seashore to the persistent Jack, while, as an outcome, we may have a hurricane on the coast or George succeeding in getting a satisfactory shave.

Look around for such possibilities in scenic, travel or vacation subjects and, whenever a picture is contemplated, examine the subject to see if it may be given a dramatic treatment. A simple study of pets might be turned into a story of a cat's quarrel with the dog and, even though the film contains nothing that would offend the most kindly disposed person, a complete drama could be produced with Tabby's defiance of the Doberman Pinscher. A film of a tramp in the hills will have an additional fillip if the protagonist is presented as getting lost and if then the



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picture shows how he discovers the trail back. If the vacation picture is turned into a search for the best automobile camp, with the most unexpected one turning out top hole, it will be a lot more amusing than if it were merely a successive record of a series of roadside scenes. The method of formulating such treatments is merely to study the setting and action that opportunity may offer, to see what is the most logical question or problem that may be posed, and then to plan the continuity accordingly. There is no place in the world and no subject conceivable in which such an interest provoking problem cannot be introduced. In short, there is always a story, if you can find it. Suppose, for example, you are filming a picture of New York. You may desire simply a scenic study, and such pictures can be very attractive. On the other hand, you may want, we will say, something a bit stronger. In such a great city, there are countless dramas and innumerable oppositions of interest. The film might be a study of the fight against time, depicting how the New Yorker rushes through his life and yet really loses the battle to Time, the victor in the end. Or, less gloomily, the picture could present the war between different methods of transportation—subways, elevateds, street cars and motors, with the palm, perhaps, going to the subways, for speed and mass service. Or, a treatment of a more educational nature would be the fight of the sulphurous and smoke laden air against the build-

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ings and monuments of the city. When presented dramatically, even a serious and educational subject, such as this, can be very intriguing.

Paper is inexpensive and it would greatly profit the movie maker to outline possible continuity treatments on paper, as they strike his fancy. He may film none of them, but the facility gained in expressing himself in terms of the motion picture will stand him good stead in all future movie making.

To make a good picture, successful from all points of view, one must plan not only to stimulate audience interest by the theme as a whole, but also to maintain interest step by step in each sequence throughout the entire picture. Every point must have a "build up," that is, a series of scenes that prepare for it and serve as a setting for it. The best anecdotes in the world would fall flat if the raconteur presented the point baldly without the preliminary setting. So it is in movies—the best shots that can be caught are less than nothing without the proper stimulation of audience anticipation. Suppose that the African traveler has brought back a splendid shot of two lions. As compelling as this material is, if it were presented forthwith on the screen—a shot of two lions and nothing more—it would be almost insignificant. Yet, if this scene is preceded by a series of shots such as: the men of the safari frightened by the nearness of the beasts, the grass of the veldt waving as if it were disturbed by the crouching animals,



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the leader of the expedition raising his rifle, the disturbance in the grass coming nearer to the camera and, finally, the appearance of the two lions, then there would be a "build up"—a stimulation of anticipation that would increase the value of the study of the lions a hundredfold. Never neglect this element in any type of picture; whenever a "build up" can be caught, get it. Frequently, amateur made pictures of wild life, although they present rare and important records, will lack just this material. A shot of a moose feeding at the water's edge or of the beaver working on the tree will stand alone in the picture, like rough, unset gems. A superlative shot deserves a real setting; don't waste it by treating it like an "also ran."

On the other hand, the movie maker, presented with a wealth of fine camera material, will frequently film too much of everything. He may overlook the fact that he cannot get the whole of life down on a single film and accordingly he may attempt to catch all the incidentals as well as the really interesting things. The importance of careful selection of useful movie material and the rejection of less important matters cannot be presented too strongly. Although one may be on a hunting trip for the first time, every detail of that trip is not going to be of interest to an audience. Much of the potential camera stuff is very dull and serves no purpose in itself or as a setting for more interesting things. Like

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the painter, to be an artist, the cameraman must select and reject carefully the bits of experience or elements of scenery that seem to cry for his attention.

One can't film everything and, in the mass of material that presents itself, there is always a shot or group of shots that has more significance, so far as the particular picture is concerned, than all the other possibilities. The movie maker who seeks to train himself to select the significant shot has started the most solid foundation, an experience that will stand him good stead in dramatic production.

Another fine point in continuity treatment of wide usefulness, as evidenced by almost every scenic or photoplay, is the *reaction shot*. When a football sequence is presented in either news or dramatic films on the professional screen, it is a common practice to splice in a shot of the crowd cheering, immediately following a scene of an important play. This type of scene is called a reaction shot, for the good reason that it represents a reaction to the main action. In a sequence of an angler playing a fish, a closeup of the man's face, inserted just after he had lost the fish, would present his disgust. The closeup is a reaction shot.

Or again, as the horses are racing neck and neck down the track, an inserted reaction shot might show a section of the crowd at the rail, waiting in breathless excitement. None of these scenes is essential to the clarity of the story but all of them would build



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up human interest. They bring in the human element and introduce an emotional content. Nothing is so interesting to people as the emotional attitudes of other people, and the reaction shot will present these attitudes in scenic, newsreel or travelog. Don't forget the bystander at the country fair, the horse show or the baseball game. One vivid, realistic scene of a genuine reaction will make a sequence. For example, the shot of the small boy absorbedly watching the performance of the strong man will bring a smile of amusement and a sympathetic interest that the street fair sequence would otherwise miss. It is not always easy to catch a specific and well timed reaction, but one can always get a group reaction whenever a crowd is present. Just as the enthusiasm of the cheering section should be an ingredient of every football film made for entertainment, so one should not neglect the other sidelines in life; catch a reaction shot of the travel group watching the Indian fakir or the street crowd agape at the steam shovel at work on a city lot; get a reaction shot of the Persian kitten when the terrier comes into the room or one of Baby when a new toy has been given to him. One of the best reaction shots in a travel film was a shot showing not the reaction of travelers to the natives but of the natives to the travelers. It was, and probably is (since good films die very slowly), sure fire! While a reaction shot does not advance the essential story (the picture of the football game would be just

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as complete, so far as the game is concerned, without it), it does add a vivid savor to the film fare.

For the greater part, scenics, personal films, travelogs and sports reels are presented from the point of view of a third person. A sort of impersonal, ubiquitous eye seems to unfold the story. Once in a while, it is wise to shift this point of view and, in a *participation shot*, to present the action from the point of view of somebody in the scene. In this way, it may be possible to give the audience some of the thrill of actual participation in the action pictured. For example, consider the heightened drama obtained in a sport film by showing a boxer circling, as shown through the eyes of his opponent. In a sequence of a ski jump, the steep declivity of the jump and the dizzy drop at the end could be shown as through the eyes of the jumper himself. While shooting the rapids as seen through the eyes of the canoeist is slightly less dramatic, it still has the value of enabling the audience to *participate* in the action as if each person in it were himself the protagonist of the screen story. One readily may recognize this technique in current photoplays in instances when the camera lens suddenly becomes the eyes of one of the characters. The same technique may be an ornamental and even practical aid in a family film. In a picture story of a family evening at home, after establishing Mother as the protagonist—the chief actor—the whole short reel might be told through her



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eyes. There would come the evening chores, putting Junior to bed and perhaps playing a hand of bridge, all shown as through Mother's eyes. Her hands might be included in the picture but, after she had been established as the principal of the picture, she herself would not appear again—the story is told through her eyes and, to all intents, the camera becomes herself.

The astute movie maker who has studied the motion pictures, as he has found them on the professional screen, will recognize that many of these items in technique have been adopted by individual movie makers and free lance cameramen from the great body of dramatic film experience that has been piling up ever since the days of Griffith. It is to him, in the last analysis, that we owe both the reaction and the participation shots, although, when first developed for screen melodrama, their use in scenic films or personal family pictures was scarcely considered. *Parallel action* is another of these items. By this may be meant the presentation of action similar to the main theme but on a lesser scale. It is another device for inserting human interest. For example, after a sequence of a study of a great express train comes a shot of little Bobby playing with his train. Again, in a picture of a yacht regatta, after a scene of the graceful big boats, comes a scene of Johnny sailing his toy sailboat. In short, parallel action is a minor variation of the big theme. The lesser theme is introduced to

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contrast with and to comment on the greater. Obviously, in topical or travel pictures, this handling requires a bit of planning—perhaps even “faking.” It never is entirely natural but it may be very effective.

Parallel action also refers to scenes of action that is presented as occurring at the same time as other action which has just been pictured. A very simple example of parallel action would be a closeup of the timekeeper's stop watch, inserted in scenes of a foot race; the hands are moving while the race is being run. Or, in a camping picture, Frank is shown building the fire while Audrey has gone to the spring to get water. The treatment might be as follows: Frank starts gathering the wood and Audrey leaves with the pail; then, a series of close scenes shows how the fire is built, while, in the meantime, Audrey is shown filling the pail at the spring. We would return to a shot of Frank working over the fire, and the sequence might be closed with a medium shot of Frank feeding the blaze and Audrey returning with the water.

One could cut back and forth from scenes of Frank to scenes of Audrey, carrying the parallel action still further, depending upon the purpose that it is to serve. Anybody familiar with the earlier movies will recall the use of this treatment in melodramas, when the heroine fell into the villain's clutches and the hero raced to the rescue. Shots of the heroine fighting for her honor or struggling against her bonds



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would be alternated with scenes of the hero, with or without company, racing to save her.

Many personal movie makers and free lance cameramen appear to have souls of exacting honesty and consequently strive to record their experiences on film exactly as they happened. Unfortunately, one must select for the screen only a few of these experiences, and not infrequently it is impractical to present them as they really occurred. In some cases, if one were to reproduce faithfully a chain of events, a whole battery of cameramen, animated with but a single purpose, would be required. The handicap may be overcome by "faking"—not a malicious counterfeit to make things appear as they are not but a sincere effort to make things appear as they might be seen from a mythical, ideal vantage point. Thus, in filming a dive, while it is impossible for the cameraman to be on several sides of the pool at once, in order to present a smooth and complete sequence instead of a futile flash and splash, he can make a sequence of the ideal dive by building up his material through *filming several dives*. In filming the crack railroad train, it might be impractical to catch all the scenes needed in one day to compose the epic of the rails, yet it would be entirely practical to visit the station on several successive days and catch the same train. If one cannot get an ideal picture of Baby in his bath during one day, fill it out the next time. If the conditions are the same, it will be impossible

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to tell the two sections of film apart and, when edited together, they will present a picture that could not possibly be gathered at one sitting (or bathing, so to speak). One might actually change the tire of the car at home and in relative comfort but, if the action is filmed in near shots that do not reveal the background, the scenes of the episode may be spliced into a picture of a motor Odyssey, and one can have the benefit of all the audience chuckles without the drawback of the actual roadside experience. So manifold are the possibilities of "faking" that this could be expanded indefinitely. All is not what it seems on the screen any more than on the stage, and one is not necessarily insincere if he fails to follow undramatic events with dogged faithfulness in order to show exactly what happened when it happened. Of course, it should go without saying that in scientific films, or records for educational purposes, this device will be handled with caution.



## CHAPTER IV

### PHOTOPLAY PLOTS

THE basic plan of a photoplay, or motion picture story, is its plot, and around this fundamental skeleton the dramatic continuity is written, just as, in building, the bricks and stone are hung from the steel frame work which supports the whole and determines its form. Were one to write continuities, dialog or motion picture treatments in general without ever creating an original story, it would still be important that he be thoroughly conversant with the structure of plots, for a bad plot, involving a fundamental error or maladjustment in structure, will carry the consequences of its defect to the very end of the picture. In fact, such defects become magnified in the course of minor continuity adjustments that seek to correct something that cannot be corrected unless the plot itself is mended.

In its elementary form, a plot is a very simple structure of ideas and, strange as it may seem to some movie makers, the creation of such a plot is an accomplishment that can be mastered with ease. Like Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who, after asking how to write prose, discovered that he had been doing it all his life, the cameraman probably has been creating plots all during his movie making ex-

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perience. Lest this might mislead somebody, let it be said straight off that the creation of plots does not in itself constitute the production of good literature in photoplay or novel. It is the interpretation of this plot in important human terms that counts. Plots are cheap, but art is still elusive.

In the discussion of the imaginative continuity treatment of scenics, travel films and topical reels, given in the last chapter, the importance of conflict became plain. When one element in the picture—say the canoeist—struggles with another—say the rapids—the picture had an added punch. It was then possible for the audience to side with one element (undoubtedly the canoeist in the example cited) against the other (the rapids) and, consequently, the audience would be curious about the outcome. Curiosity, the question what will happen, as we have learned, is the root of absorbed interest. Here is the essence of the plot structure; some of the imaginative continuity treatments cited were, broadly speaking, plots.

A plot has a beginning which states a problem, a middle which develops the problem and an end which presents an answer. From any opposition of interest or desires, a plot can be created. Thomas loves Mildred, but so does Jack. There is the problem. Jack has a car which dazzles Mildred and she accepts an invitation to go for a ride and a picnic, breaking her date with Thomas. Thomas follows the party on his bicycle. Here is the development, or



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middle action. When Thomas reaches the meadow where Mildred and Jack are having their picnic, he finds that an unsympathetic bull has treed Jack and that the animal has started to chase Mildred. Thomas rescues Mildred in the nick of time. Here is the climax, for it may be safely presumed that under such circumstances Mildred will accept Thomas. Here, Thomas was opposed to Jack, for both wanted Mildred. The question was which one would get her, which the climax answers.

It is not necessary that the opposition be between two men or between a man and a woman. Nature may oppose man. For example, a fisherman is out in his boat at sea and a storm comes up. He tries for the shore (the problem), he fights the combers and is almost swamped several times (the middle action) but he finally makes the shore where his wife is waiting for him (the climax). Or, the conflict may be between two elements in nature, as in the fight between the sea and the shore that was suggested as a scenic continuity motif.

Conflict is not enough to make a plot—there must be a statement of the problem, development and a climax or solution, one way or another. If the picture simply shows a storm at sea, that is an incident. However, if the fisherman fights the storm and there is a development of the conflict, then a plot is produced. If Jack and Thomas both yearn for Mildred without coming to an issue in one way or another, it

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is an incident. The development and climax between Jack and Thomas might occur in a hundred ways—they might decide to run a race for her favor, on the basis of may the faster man win, or they might compete in the field of higher mathematics. But, whatever the mechanism, there must be the development of the middle action and the definite climax, or our story is an incident and not a plot.

The simplest method of plot writing is to set an objective for some character and then to throw obstacles in the way of its attainment. For example, Johnny wants a dog. He is shown looking at pictures of dogs in a dog biscuit advertisement. He may even build a dog house in anticipation of being given a pup. But Dad doesn't want Johnny to have a dog because it might dig up the flower beds. Here is the obstacle. The working out will be the middle action, while the solution will be the climax. Suppose that Johnny gets the dog, then what happens afterward would be falling action. The climax is the arrival of the dog, and how Johnny feeds or cares for his new friend is unimportant. He has the dog, and the audience will take the rest for granted. The story should end when the climax is presented; there should be a minimum of falling action, for the interest sustaining curiosity has vanished. No longer is there a question of what will happen; the audience now knows what has happened and the rest is accepted on the courtesy basis only, like somebody else's bridge post



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mortem. When the heroine says, "yes," the story is done if matrimony is the object of the plot. It isn't necessary to show the wedding or how the honeymoon tickets are bought. It used to be that there was more falling action in photoplays than nowadays. There might be a little glimpse of the two true hearts united, as well as a shot of the villain getting his just deserts. Today, that is wisely eliminated and the story ends when it is finished.

In technical plot terminology, the hero, with whom the audience sympathizes, is the *protagonist*; the villain is the *opponent* and the heroine is the *objective*. The protagonist may be the seashore and the opponent the ocean that eats it away, while the object is the maintenance of the coast line. In the story of the dog, Johnny was the protagonist, Dad was the opponent and the dog was the objective. The audience shares the emotions of the protagonist, to a greater or less extent. In the case of youngsters watching a simple Western melodrama where good is good and bad is bad, there are no half tones, and the audience sympathy is all with the hero or protagonist. In a society drama of the ways of people of Park Avenue, there may not be such a certain separation of good and bad, but nevertheless there is a protagonist with whom, for the greater part, the audience sympathizes and whose viewpoint is made most understandable.

Plots are lengthened by the increase in the num-

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ber of obstacles between the protagonist and the objective or by complications in these obstacles. Thus, Johnny is told that, if he will stay at home and weed the garden for seven weekends, he may have a dog. This he engages to do. However, he is tempted by the prospects of the swimming hole, and on a hot day is lured away by his friends. In the water, and enjoying the swim, he dares his friends to swim out to an island. They accept. Johnny swims to the island, but he gets a cramp just before he reaches it. He is marooned on the island. A dog swims out to him and, by barking, guides the searchers. When penitent Johnny is taken home, he is given a dog by his relieved parents.

This is a considerable expansion of the simple outline first presented, but it is only a larger piece of the original cloth, an extension of the first design. One could expand further and in many different directions. Dad, desirous of instilling discipline, might have overestimated the work that Johnny should do for his reward and so on. In practice, the protagonist, opponent and objective are not always as clear as in the instances cited. The statement of the problem may be fairly complicated; the villain or opponent may not be one, he may be two or several persons. As in the Greek tragedies, a malign fate may play the rôle of opponent. The protagonist may be struggling against his environment, the real opponent, although it might be symbolized by a particular character.



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Although development of the plot must progress to sustain interest, it does not progress by mounting evenly and steadily to the grand climax. It is impossible to increase the suspense, step by step, with mathematical accuracy, and it would be undesirable to do, if it were convenient. The steadily mounting tension would be unbearable and the audience would laugh at the story in self defense. A plot reaches its final climax through a series of minor climaxes and, in between these, there are low spots in the action—temporary lulls. If the upward course of the plot were charted, it would take the form of a zigzag line with high and low points, each high point being a little further up the scale than the last.

To break the feeling of uneasiness created by a strong situation and to avoid too great a tension before the final climax, a comedy relief is frequently used. Humor breaks the strain and, after the audience has laughed, the story can resume in a lower key. Suppose that Johnny doesn't get his dog and so he decides to leave home at night. The situation is pretty tragic to Johnny and it must be made so to the audience or the story is a failure. Yet, this is not the end of the picture and the tension must not go too far. So, after writing his farewell note, Johnny sees a school book with some homework that he has been postponing (previously established); he gives this an expressive kick which immediately lets the audience know that Johnny is still a small boy and that the

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situation may not be as bad as it seems. In this version of the "Johnny and the dog" story, Johnny would sneak downstairs for his getaway and would incidentally run into a burglar, so frightening the prospective collector of the family silver that he awakens the household, resulting in the capture of the burglar and the presentation of the pup to Johnny.

Provided that they are properly constructed, plots are susceptible to sudden twists, producing the unexpected ending. If Bill and George love Kate and decide on some sort of a competition for her favor, in the meantime, Kate may pick up with a dark horse, completely upsetting the orthodox solution. Almost any plot may be given such a twist or surprise ending. You may "kid" the gravest of the Elizabethan or Victorian dramas simply by introducing the unexpected twist.

In the professional motion pictures, producers choose their plots and construct settings and select actors to fit them. The amateur movie maker will do much better to work the other way around. He can get much better results if he tailors his plot to fit his facilities. If he lives near a desert, he can use a Western story, and if he lives in the mountains he can weave a tale based on mountain climbing. The picture will have the ring of authenticity if it is based on situations known to the producer and his amateur cast, and certainly it will be much easier to film.



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Local settings can suggest the story basis and the cameraman will find it easy to work out the plot with this as his compass.

Should a group of young people in a small town, or in the suburbs of a larger one, plan to produce a photoplay, they need not go far for their settings and characters. The background of the story can be built around their own homes and, for the plot itself, almost any simple opposition of interests will do. Suppose that Gerald Smith is in love with Mary Hopkins, both being members of the town's younger set. Everything is going swimmingly until Mary's mother falls out with Gerald's mother over a matter at the bridge club. In consequence of her irritation with Mrs. Smith Senior's lack of skill at contract, Mrs. Hopkins gets greatly interested in George Peabody, a newcomer to the town and a bridge expert. She wants him to marry Mary so that this contract wizard will be a member of the family to confound Mrs. Smith. Here, then, is the statement of the problem, and the opposition of interest is clear. It would be very easy to make this picture in the average small town or suburban district. Some interiors in an average home, a card game, a front porch and perhaps an automobile would be about the extent of the settings and properties required. Gerald finally could outwit Mrs. Smith and her bridge expert with situations and properties that are scarcely more difficult to manage.

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Look about you and discover what you have in the way of special facilities to add interest to the situation. Should the action take place at a summer resort on the lake, Gerald, in desperation, might kidnap Mrs. Hopkins and the bridge expert, marooning them on an island. There Mrs. Hopkins would find that, although George might play a good game of cards, he was worse than useless in a crisis. When the party is finally rescued, George flees by the night train, Mrs. Hopkins gives up cards for golf and Gerald marries Mary. For a windup, we see Mrs. Smith learning golf, too, and we leave the two ladies back at their perennial quarrel.

If there isn't an island, then use a motor car and, if this isn't convenient, work out the story on the tennis court. Make capital of whatever you have and write a simple plot that will not strain the capabilities of the cast.

For those who do not want to write their own stories, there are plenty of tales in old magazines. Such stories can be adapted to meet the requirements of the amateur groups, for plots are very malleable. A plot that has been developed in terms of Wall Street could be translated to a dude ranch, while a yarn that was staged originally in the South Seas may be just as good at the summer camp. Steer away from the window dressing and study the essential plot and then adapt it to your needs. Using such stories as a starting point, you can evolve something



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that is actually very different but which will fit your own needs. If you follow the essential outline of the original story, then you must not capitalize the picture in any way. Indeed, it is best to get the permission of the author in any case. Sometimes they are surprisingly obliging when they know that they are dealing with a bona fide amateur group.

Plot material is very adaptable; actually there are only a few essential plots, and the manifold stories that we know are but developments, adaptations or combinations of them. There is the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Essentially, Samson was a strong man—strong physically as in the Bible story, or strong mentally or strong financially, as the case might be. Delilah is the beautiful woman who, through her wiles, tempts Samson into a sacrifice of his strength. In modern terms, Samson's strength might be strength of character, let us say. He is Mr. Jones, a reform candidate for mayor, upright, honest and beyond reproach. Delilah is the friend of Montgomery, one of the corrupt city bosses, whom the reform candidate is opposing. Mr. Jones and Lilly (our Delilah) meet accidentally and, knowing nothing of her background, Mr. Jones is greatly taken with her. When they find out about Lilly's new friend, the political racketeers immediately press her into service and plan to "frame" Samson, in this case, Mr. Jones. They may succeed, as happened in the Bible story, and the tale may end there. Samson—in this case,

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Mr. Jones—may make a comeback and carry Lilly with him, or her efforts may fail in the first place; it all depends on how the plot is worked out. The tale is familiar in one form or another to everybody; essentially it is the story of Samson and Delilah.

Another basic plot, that can be interpreted in as many milieus and backgrounds as the imagination can produce, is the story of Cinderella. Cinderella was a mistreated and underrated girl, persecuted by her step mother and compelled to hide her superior merits so that her less attractive step sisters could hold the stage. But a good fairy gives Cinderella her big chance, and Cinderella makes the most of it, producing a happy and satisfactory ending and the utter confusion of the step sisters. Cinderella can change her sex and station in life and still remain a Cinderella. She might be a small boy who is not given a chance to go to school, while his older and stupid brother, favored by the family, is offered every opportunity. Cinderella might be Fred, underrated clerk in a jewel firm. George (the step sisters), a flashy salesman, is the favorite of the owners. George is seeking the hand of Helen, heiress of the firm (the Prince) and, of course, Fred admires her from afar, although he realizes that he has no chance. The good fairy may be fate or she might be, in this case, an assistant manager who realized the true qualities of Fred and the comparative worthlessness of George. The situation can be developed in a thousand ways.



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Let us say that George, casual about business and vain of his judgment, is duped by a pair of jewel thieves. They put through an order for delivery of immensely valuable stones to an address in an old residential district. George, having concluded the deal, leaves for the evening to keep an engagement with Helen and turns over the details to Fred. The boy, realizing that, as things stand, his employer's daughter hardly notices him, is morose and sad. The old assistant manager encourages him and tells him to use his intelligence. Fred replies to the effect that if he were to use his intelligence he would never deliver the jewels to the prospective customers, saying that he believes them to be crooks. The assistant manager is incredulous. Fred starts off to deliver the jewels, but with an element of determination to assert himself nevertheless. He arrives at the address and finds it an unused house, partly boarded up. He reconnoiters the place, his suspicions are aroused. In the meantime, the elderly assistant manager thinks things over and comes to the conclusion that Fred may be right. He follows him. The net result is that the two men, after a swift series of adventures, capture the confidence men and take them to a police station where it is discovered that they are old convicts of known reputation. Of course, this brings Fred recognition and promotion with the net result that he meets Helen.

The same story could be told with the background

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of a bond house, a bank or a cattle ranch. Cinderella, the underestimated character, could be a bronco buster, a mining engineer or a doctor, while, accordingly, the prince could be a rodeo prize, a gold strike or a successful operation, and the bad step sisters, the villains of the story, may be cast to fit.

The story of Damon and Pythias offers another elementary plot mold which can be removed from its classical background and applied to present day life just as easily as the fairy story of Cinderella. The familiar triangle is known to everybody, for its potentialities are ever present in human society. However, it may not be equally evident that the third party in a triangle need not be another person. It may be business, a devotion to a baseball or an uncommon taste for liquor.

Plots are never original, although the application of them may be entirely so. The movie maker, who starts with his needs and a knowledge of his requirements, can tailor a plot to fit them with ease. Working out the story in terms that he can handle is more important than the precise nature of the plot. The real art and expression will come in interpreting the story in motion picture terms, and so what appears to be the stumbling block, the plot, is really the least difficult element. The plot can be carved out at will, but this facility doesn't mean that a good picture is an inevitable result. Treatment and scenario are all important.



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Not every story makes a good picture, not even every good story. Critics are often impatient of the fact that the motion picture version of a novel or a stage play involves extensive changes and manipulations, damaging, in their opinion, to the art of the tale. However, the motion picture, like every other medium of human expression, imposes its own conditions. It is not surprising that some narrative ideas do not furnish material for sonnets or one act plays; why, then, is it so amazing that last year's best seller, so successful as a novel, has never appeared on the screen? And, if the great popularity of the title and other commercial considerations should induce some producer to make a movie of it, why then is it surprising that it should meet with considerable rearrangement?

The amateur producer, writing or adapting a plot for the motion pictures, can meet the special requirements of the medium in advance, without the censure and pressure suffered by his professional counterpart. The first condition that he will want to observe is that the story be one which can be presented by action or pictured symbols. A philosophical argument or the abstractions of esthetic discussion do not make good motion picture material. Even though the story is to be produced as a talkie, it should not depend upon its dialog.

The plot should be such that dialog is an adjunct to the pictured action—an additional facility rather

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than the chief means of telling the story. Interest should not center so much in what people say as what they do. The playwright's product, depending as it usually does on dialog, the verbal interchange of ideas and quips, in average circumstances makes a very indifferent movie, silent or talkie. Since Shakespeare wrote for the stage, it is not surprising that his acknowledged masterpieces are not the best movie material. Story simplicity is all important. It is impractical to present in motion pictures the multiple story ramifications of Dickens or, for that matter, of most Nineteenth Century authors. The elaborate compounding of plots and the development of side plots produce a story that the motion picture medium cannot handle. A direct plot of fairly simple structure with few subsidiary issues will make the best picture. For the amateur, the simpler the plot, the better. In the first flush of the idea, a club or dramatic group often will want to undertake some literary theme that would make a professional scenarist quail. The choice of an overcomplicated story comes from the desire to find a theme worthy of serious treatment. Important as this may seem, the real problem will be to develop a treatment that will be worthy of the theme.

Akin to the need for simplicity is the necessity for relative brevity. In a novel, a plot can be extended through many episodes and may be interpreted through the eyes of several characters. But one can



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read a novel through a series of evenings. A motion picture play is, by convention and convenience, limited to a single sitting of less than two hours and, in the case of the amateur, economy is an additional limiting factor. A four hundred foot reel (16mm.) is an ideal length for a first photoplay, and it seldom pays the amateur to tackle a plot that will require a footage much greater than three reels. It is comforting to remember, however, that length of screen time has nothing whatever to do with essential quality.

Except in the case of what may be called "advanced films," involving an extensive use of pictorial symbolism and trick photography with which to imply atmosphere, the motion picture is a direct story telling medium. Characters and types should be relatively simple, and motives should be rather obvious. Mental involvements of one kind or another and elusive psychological attitudes engendered by complex reactions to plot situations make very poor movie material, if direct action of characters cannot present them plainly. In the talkies, it takes endless dialog to establish the obscure emotional reactions of characters, and the silent medium is lost in the face of this complexity. Many modern novels of complicated, unpleasant and unhealthy attitudes are not suitable for movies for more reasons than one.

It is most satisfactory to tell a motion picture story in the third person, the camera becoming the imper-

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sonal narrator of events. A picture in the first person requires a very clumsy mechanism—introducing the raconteur, establishing his background and then the inevitable slow fade out on the group of listening friends as the real tale begins. The treatment was long ago discarded in professional films and rarely creeps into amateur pictures. It is as well, for it was essentially artificial and the mechanics always creaked alarmingly. Once in a while the idea is attempted in short subjects: Meredith is supposed to have had a whale of a big deep sea fishing adventure and is pictured displaying his trophies to an awe struck friend. The friend (who evidently doesn't know what he is in for, although everybody in the audience does) asks a number of unlikely questions that are calculated to draw out the story of the trip. The raconteur, nothing loath, promptly sits down or leans against the mantel and begins the long yarn of how it all happened. The scene fades out on him speaking while the next shot fades in on action in the gulf of Mexico that was obviously filmed some time ago.

For amateur work, even in the case of an experienced group, a plot calling for elaborate settings, costumes and characterizations is out of the question. Production will require all the creative energy that can be spared and, if the enthusiasm and impetus of the group are diverted into sewing costumes, building sets and borrowing a multitude of small accessories from neighbors, there will be little



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left for the actual filming and the all important production itself. Simplicity should be the keynote of the amateur photoplay, silent or talkie. Rely on the camera for elaborate effects and don't attempt to vie with Belasco in production.

The true art of the cinema lies in telling a story that could not be told adequately in any other medium, or in telling it with a force and reality impossible to any other medium. The plot should be written around the potentialities of the motion picture camera and the author should make himself familiar with every one of its facilities and weaknesses.

## CHAPTER V

### DRAMATIC SCENARIOS

A DRAMATIC scenario presents the plot and action of a story in a manner and form that will be convenient as a guide for motion picture photography. It was pointed out earlier that a scenario is simply a list of scenes—figuratively speaking, a blueprint of the structure of the proposed picture. However, the scenario also embodies the motion picture interpretation of the story and hence, in writing a story, one really attempts two things—first, the arrangement of incident and story elements so that they are better suited to the motion picture and will therefore be more effective dramatically on the screen and, second, recording this arrangement in such a manner that a convenient guide for director and cameraman will be produced.

The latter part of the dual job is frequently, but erroneously, held to be the more important of the two. Actually, if a well knit and skillfully prepared motion picture treatment is incorporated in the script, it doesn't matter much in what particular form it is cast. The method of typing or spacing scene divisions or the exact form of abbreviation and technical terminology is not so important in scenario



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writing as the content of ideas and the understanding of motion pictures that is embodied in this shell. There are convenient forms, of course, and there is an economy of effort in following accepted procedures. Certain verbose, "arty" scripts that essay to delineate every movement in each scene would drive a cameraman or director mad. However, the best scenario forms are easy to learn. Nevertheless, motion picture treatment itself is an art that can be acquired only with practice and the development of a feeling for the potentialities of the camera.

Talkie scenarios involve a subsidiary or parallel script of dialog, but the essential principles of scene treatments remain the same, and the student of talkie scripts would do well to begin with a study of the silent scenario. If he can break down a story into a good silent script, he is three quarters of the way to his goal. In fact, he might handle his job and yet never be a good dialog writer, for this is a specialized field of its own. The dialog of a script may be written by another person, although the one who writes the treatment and scenario itself would control the picture. As the use of 16mm. and 35mm. sound on film spreads in the amateur, industrial, educational and general non theatrical field, it is not unlikely that writing the basic scenario and the dialog scripts will frequently be divorced.

If a play or short story, not written especially for

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the motion pictures, is to be scenarized, the first step is to prepare a *treatment*. This is a revision of the essential elements of the story so that they better will fit the needs and the facilities of the motion picture. The procedure is to read over the story several times, so that one is entirely familiar with it, and then to recast it in a simple outline form which eliminates conversations and yet presents the fundamentals of situations. Unusable material is eliminated and considerable adaptation may be necessary in the course of preparing a treatment. The treatment presents the bald essentials, nothing more. For example, the treatment of a fairly complex yarn might begin as follows:

Jane, the daughter of a well to do family, loves cats and is a hero worshiper. She is fond of Bob, who loves her entirely. Bob is always at a disadvantage with Jane because he is very fond of his dog which Jane detests. Jane's father and mother, solid citizens, look favorably on Bob as a prospective son in law, for he is a fine type of young man and constant in his affection for Jane. Jane sees in a newspaper the picture of a handsome young fireman who has rescued a cat and its kittens from a burning building. Jane is fascinated and decides that she has fallen in love with this brave lad. She determines to meet him.

This brief synopsis could represent the motion picture treatment of a considerable part of a short



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story or a novel. Note that there is nothing in this outline that could not be filmed readily.

In the story or play, all this background, and more, might have been told in a lengthy dialog between Jane and her mother or between Jane and the cook, to whom she confides.

In the treatment, only the essentials of the plot are presented, leaving the imagination free to interpret this to best advantage for the motion picture, when it comes to casting the material in scenario form.

Some portions of the original story, whether it be a historical narrative to be interpreted in motion pictures for a civic purpose or a simple yarn for a college play, probably will have to be eliminated in the motion picture treatment. There will be side issues that can be covered in a few words in the story form but which would take many minutes on the screen. There may be philosophical discussions that must be interpreted in visual symbols and there may be all manner of elements that, while acceptable in print, could never be pictured happily on the screen.

If the story is being written directly for a photoplay, then it can be cast directly into the form of a treatment or plot outline. It should contain all the essential items of the story and all the details of the development of the plot, but it should be written in as brief a form as practical.

With the treatment in hand, one can begin the scenario. A convenient form is as follows:

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<i>Scene number</i>	<i>Camera position (Closeup, Close, Medium, Long, etc.)</i>	<i>Particular camera angle (if desir- able). Set.</i>
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Description of action of scene.

Titles might be lettered "A," "B," "C," etc., or numbered 1, 2, 3.

Following this form, the opening scenes in a scenario of the treatment outlined above might run as follows:

<i>Scene</i>	<i>Camera position</i>	<i>Camera angle, set and action.</i>
1.	Closeup	Downward shot of a litter of kittens playing around the mother cat. They are all in a box that has been placed on a bench on a lawn. A girl's hands come into the scene and lift out one of the kittens.
2.	Close	Of Jane standing above the kittens. Attractive home and garden in the background. She has lifted one of the kittens to her face and is cuddling it. She stoops and picks up another kitten.
3.	Close	Low angle shot of a terrier, strain-



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ing at a leash and barking. The person holding the leash cannot be seen.

4. Closeup Of Jane, who jumps at the sound of the dog barking. She turns and stares past the camera angrily, crying:

Title 1. "Anna! There's a dog on the place!"

5. Medium shot Jane standing by the basket of kittens, back porch in the background. Jane places the kittens tenderly in the basket and a housemaid comes running out of the house with a broom. She races up to Jane.

The basic and most essential feature of scenarization is the division of the action into scenes so that the story can be told best with the motion picture camera. The tendency of most beginners at scenario writing is to make scenes too long and to include more action than should be presented from one camera position and angle. This tendency is perhaps caused by confusion with the legitimate stage scene, which is vastly different from a motion picture scene. If one grasps the principle that "scene" in motion pictures does not refer to the set, but to the camera position, considerable ground has been gained. In movies, there may be many scenes on one set.

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On the legitimate stage, all the action given in the sample treatment, and much more in fact, could be conveyed in one scene, but in the motion pictures five separate shots have been used already. This was not done simply to provide variety, although variety is a useful byproduct; it was done so that the camera could reveal to the audience the story as intimately as possible and could make each important detail as plain as possible. In a dramatic film, just as in a scenic or travel film, the working rule is to plan the script so that the camera always will be as close to the essential action as possible without excluding any important part of it, or any part of the background essential to the story for some reason. The first scene was a closeup from a downward angle. This featured the kittens and introduced one of the important elements of the story. The action of the girl's hand coming into the scene and lifting up a kitten, carries the thought naturally to the second scene, a close shot of the girl herself. Here, the girl, the leading character in the story, is introduced. Although she is featured in the shot, enough of the background is included to give the audience a glimpse of the locale. The close shot of the dog brings in an opposing element to this atmosphere of feline peace, while the closeup of Jane plainly shows her reaction to this. The medium shot which follows shows more of the background and carries on the story. Although Anna, the housemaid, is introduced,



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she is not important to the story. No closeup of her is required.

The point might be raised that all this action could be shown in one medium shot—and so it could. However, it would require just as much footage, and the film would lose most of its interest. The audience scarcely would be able to see the kittens and certainly would not get the charming downward closeup of them; Jane would not be introduced satisfactorily, nor would her love of cats be shown so clearly. The whole episode would lose force and meaning. There would be no dramatic highlights and, in spite of all this sacrifice, nothing would be gained. There would have to be just as much footage to cover the action, as in the present treatment.

In addition to presenting characters, these opening scenes were planned to establish elements of the story. That Jane loves cats is one of the circumstances important to the plot. Consequently, although we might have made a very pretty picture of Jane in an evening frock receiving the mayor at a dinner party, we begin by showing her out of doors playing with a litter of kittens. The audience will take it as natural and understandable when Jane later is fascinated by the fireman, for they know that she is very fond of cats. Of course, this point would be supported in succeeding scenes, but in the opening shot we have *established* Jane's love of cats. We also incidentally have established Jane herself and

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we have shown that she doesn't like dogs. Then, since Bob is at the other end of the terrier's leash, we have made way for his introduction and will have tied him up figuratively as well as literally with a canine element. The cat versus the dog will have symbolized some conflict between Jane and Bob, and the audience will not be surprised that she does not quite estimate him at his true worth.

The scenarist must remind himself constantly that the audience does not know the story and that, if he does not make an important point plain, it will not be plain. In analyzing the proposed structure of the early scenes of the script, it is important to consider what is to come later and to prepare for it. Motives and backgrounds must be established early, or subsequent actions will be inexplicable. If Lord Beaverdam is irritable and unreasonable in consequence of indigestion, establish the fact that he *has* indigestion before the scene arrives in which it is one of the important motivating factors. It will not be necessary, in all likelihood, to devote a series of scenes to this purpose only. The indigestion would be established along with a number of other things. The fact, for example, that Beaverdam is as fond of his daughter as of his food, could be shown at the same time in a sequence of a luncheon.

In a silent motion picture, action and pantomime carry the burden of the plot, and the scenarist must seek for means of telling the story most satisfactorily



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in visual terms. It is conceivable that, instead of the above five scenes in the story of Jane and Bob, there could have been but one scene, in which Anna, the housemaid, stood on the porch and said (by means of a title): "Miss Jane is crazy about kittens but Mr. Thorne won't give up his dog. I wonder if they will ever agree." It is evident that this effort to tell the story in a title would not make a good motion picture. It wouldn't even make a good talkie. Although the audience would be in possession of the salient facts, the resultant movie would have no pictorial, dramatic quality. The spoken subtitle is a substitute, and a rather artificial one at best. The written word is at a great disadvantage on the screen and is very limited. Consequently, a story told largely by titles is not only impossible from the viewpoint of artistic motion pictures but it also is likely to be incomprehensible. As a general rule, it may be said that the more the action and pantomime tell the story and the fewer the titles, the better the script. There are exceptions, of course, but the rule is a good antidote for movie makers who tend to resort to titles as a convenient solution of the problem of adapting the story for the camera.

Variety in camera distance from the subject and angle has value of itself. Although the script may specify a series of closeups, the director doubtless will vary them to a considerable extent. This variation should be represented somewhat in the scena-

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rio, however, and, should a series of scenes of about the same camera distance come in succession, then is the time to scrutinize the script very carefully to see if the camera is really telling the story to the best advantage. The well planned scenario will indicate a mobile camera that is shifting its viewpoint continually.

Dramatic emphasis can be obtained by shifting the view point. A character sees something on the floor. What is it? A closeup answers the question dramatically: it is a gun. Another character walks to a door and stops, staring into the room beyond. A medium shot from his position in the door reveals what he sees: his sweetheart in the arms of another chap. In both these examples, the camera took the place of the eyes of a character, presenting the scene as he sees it, an important piece of technique. In a scene following, in either of the above examples, the camera could take the place of a third person again, watching events from an impersonal angle. This might be handled in a medium shot, or if the *reaction* of the character is important, it might be a closeup of his face. The medium shot would not show the reaction of facial expression clearly, but the closeup would.

It is not only in dramatic instances, such as these exemplify, that the camera can present the scene from the eyes of a character more effectively. In a sequence of a boy and a girl making love, the boy



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might be shown from the girl's eyes and then the girl from the boy's eyes. If the action suited, the alternation of viewpoints might be carried on for several changes. This shift in viewpoint can be conveniently indicated in a script by the words "reverse angle" thus:

20.      Close      Ruth from Rob's viewpoint. She is imploring his assistance. Her father will go to prison if Rob does not intervene.
21.      Close      Reverse angle. Rob lowers his head, his face a picture of indecision. He must find some way to help, but he dare not.

It is not necessary to show every detail of a progressive action. If a character in the story leaves his home and drives to the bank to cash a check, it is not needful or desirable to follow him continuously. It is not even imperative to present portions of each stage in his journey. One scene might show him leaving the house and then, after shots of some other phase of the story—say of his daughter shopping—we could follow with a scene of him already at the bank, cashing the check at the teller's window. All the stages in between could be eliminated neatly and with the advantage of both economy in footage and greater story strength. If several scenes of the in between stages were given, the pace of the story would

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drag and would lose some of its interest sustaining quality. The needless detail would fritter away the accumulated audience interest and the tension of the plot. There is nothing so exasperating as useless detail in motion picture treatments. However, if something important to the later development of the story is to happen on the trip to the bank, then, obviously, we cannot skip over it. The rule is to present only the action essential to the story. If it is desirable to establish some motive or situation during the trip to the bank, then it is just as important to treat it in suitable detail as it is to jump over it, if this is not the case.

The audience will take all unimportant things for granted, because they are intensely interested in the development of the story. It is not necessary to establish that portion of the possible past history of a character that has no important bearing on the story. For example, in the partial treatment given above, it is beside the point how Bob fell in love with Jane or where he first met her. The fact that he is in love with her is enough when it is established. We start from there.

In a well written scenario, there will be many instances of transition from one place to another or one time to another without presenting all the intervening details. However, the observer of the professional screen will note that these things are usually accomplished smoothly and naturally. Yet, should



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we simply telescope the trip to the bank by presenting first a shot of the man leaving the house and, second, a scene of him at the teller's window, under average circumstances, the result would be very awkward. It would seem that the character had magically transversed the intervening space. This problem might be solved by a dissolve or a pair of fades that would indicate lapse of time. This would have been a satisfactory answer, if it were needful to focus attention on the whole transaction. However, there are many instances where emphasizing the transition would serve no purpose. In such cases, a ready and facile technique is to use some bit of parallel action. If the character is seen at his doorstep and this scene is followed by a shot of some other parallel action in the story—say his wife playing bridge—and if then we come back to our friend at the bank, the transition will be much more logical. The intervening scene, which should carry on some part of the story, also serves to bridge a lapse of time and a shift of place. It has the value of the phrase, "in the meantime."

In a silent film, spoken titles take the place of the acted speech, and it is necessary to show only the beginning and end of the pantomime of speaking. Not infrequently, just the beginning will suffice. However, it is all important to show who is doing the speaking, in other words, to identify the source of a spoken title. Few things in a movie are more baffling

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than titles that proceed from nowhere to confuse and astound the audience. Sometimes the context of the action may make the speaker plain. For example, a group is shown playing billiards and a newcomer rushes in crying, "The house is on fire." Plainly the agitation and haste would identify the speaker as the one who is crying the warning. On the other hand, suppose that the group is standing about the billiard table admiring a play and one of them is to say: "I intend to buy American Bonds at 110 tomorrow." Assuming that the context of the film does not make it particularly evident, nobody could tell exactly who was supposed to do the speaking. In that case, a closeup or close shot inserted of the speaker would probably be advisable. The action might run as follows:

40.      Medium      Across the room, showing the billiard table, the two men playing and the three other house guests watching.

41.      Close      Of Clyde who pauses in a play to chalk his cue. He speaks casually:

Title: "I intend to buy American Bonds at 110 tomorrow."

42.      Close      Over Clyde's shoulder of Buckley, the others in the background. Buckley raises his eyebrows quizzically.



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Note that the following devices were used to make plain the speaker of the title: (1) shift in viewpoint from a medium shot of the group to a close view of the speaker, concentrating audience attention on him; (2) a pause in the flow of action; (3) a break in the action of the speaker (he stops playing and chalks his cue); (4) a shot from his viewpoint showing another character's reaction to what he says.

It may not be necessary to use all these devices, but it is better to be overcareful in identifying the speaker of a spoken title than to allow the title to come from nowhere.

Place and time lapse titles are now being used in talkie as well as in silent pictures. The scenarist can make use of them no matter in which medium he works. However, they do interrupt the flow of action and should be used only when necessary to bridge big gaps in the action or flow of story.

In preparing a scenario, one must keep an eye on the fundamentals of plot construction, for, after all, scenario writing is but retelling the plot in another medium. In this respect, building up the scale of dramatic values—the gradual increase in tension of the situation—is very important. An analysis of any dramatic screen play will show one how the tension is increased step by step. However, it is never allowed to go too far before the climax, lest it reach a peak and subsequent action drop as a result. One must build upward steadily toward the climax. How-

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ever, it is not desirable nor possible to build up evenly. The story will progress in a series of waves, each peak a little higher than the previous one, but always followed by a lower point. A comedy relief will always break down the tension. For example, in the "last minute to play" football film, the excitement is growing rapidly. Will the hero score the final touchdown and clear his honor? Faster and faster grows the action and faster and faster seem to crawl the hands of the clock. Then, just as the situation grows intolerable, an insert shows the hero's cook listening in over the radio—she is mad with excitement; she picks up a coffee pot and commences an end run, dodging imaginary foes. The laugh clears the air and the audience can return to the story still interested but not so highly keyed.

A series of short flashes of action to build up a total impression, the so called *montage*, may be of value in producing suspense or creating an atmosphere. The condemned man is sitting in his cell and reviews his past life. A series of short flashes, following one another pellmell, recapitulate his experiences. Or, a seamstress is tired, worn out with the day's toil. She is weary of her squalid surroundings which press down upon her like a physical burden. The symbols of these things—dirty dishes, broken toys, torn places in a carpet, a drunken husband, etc.—flash on the screen one after another.

The use of visual symbols permeates the dramatic



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screen. A cascade, or series of such symbols, often will introduce a story effectively. Say that it is to be a plot based on incidents at a summer colony at a beach resort—then a series of flashes of girls and boys swimming, diving, surfboard riding, dancing, drinking cocktails on a hotel porch, lying on the beach, etc., might follow one another in swift succession, as an introduction to set the place and mood of the tale.

The panorama, the justly condemned snare for otherwise innocent scenic filmers, has a limited usefulness in planning photoplays and dramatic business films; it may be used to follow a character through a restricted range of movement, if the set is simple and there are no strong vertical lines or bright objects in the background. For example, if one character is talking to another in the scene, as the first man walks a few paces closer to his companion, the camera might be pivoted to follow his movement and to center both characters. This could be indicated in the script by: *Camera "pans" to follow Jack.*

This treatment should be used sparingly and never in the case of rapid action. It is difficult to understand what justifies the sudden "swishing," blurred panoramas that are sometimes used in current photoplays to shift from one scene to another.

However, it is by no means necessary or even desirable that a camera remain stationary, chained to

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fixed viewpoints, while the story is unfolding. In fact, one of the most important cinematic discoveries of the 1920's was that the camera might be mobile and could follow the action more intimately by moving forward or backward, as the case required. This, it was discovered, produced an effect very different from the panorama; it had none of the eye assaulting disadvantages of the panorama and, in fact, was found to be restful on the screen, as long as the movement was smooth and steady.

Now known as a *traveling* or *trucking* shot, this type of scene has become so common in the current photoplay that every movie goer must be familiar with the technique. It has added enormously to the camera's power as a story telling instrument and, although it is capable of abuse (what cine device is not?), it is yet one of the most potent instruments in the battery of cinematic tools. With it, the vision of the all seeing camera eye can be further controlled to serve the purpose of the movie maker or continuity writer.

Unfortunately, for the amateur, a smooth forward or backward movement of the camera is not easy to produce (unhappily, differing from the "pan" which can be made on almost any tripod). So far as the amateur is concerned, it is out of the question in most scenic filming and, for the most part, is limited in application to interior industrials, various practical films and photoplays. The theatrical studios have



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giant cranes and specially built trucks; tracks can be constructed so that the camera may be rolled down stairs and sets may be built with traveling camera shots in view. However, the amateur and the non theatrical filmer still have their ingenuity, and amazingly successful trucking shots may be produced on a small scale. Rubber tired tea wagons or children's carts have been pressed into service and, of course, if the production warrants, it is always possible to have a special truck built.<sup>1</sup>

The forward moving shot gives a sense of progress, psychological as well as physical, and in consequence it is very effective in opening a story or for following a character from incidental or establishing action to a dramatic episode. For example, the picture opens with a scene of Daphne paying her taxi bill and running up the steps of her home while the camera follows. She opens the door and, inside, throws off her hat and walks, first rapidly and then more slowly, down a long hall. As she walks down the hall, the camera follows her until she stops before a door. There she pauses and hesitates. Then, while the camera, continuously moving, has come to a close shot, she draws a deep breath, pats her hair carefully and finally lifts her head with an air of determination and knocks.

<sup>1</sup> Note: A simple overhead trolley arrangement for making traveling shots indoors and out is described by Russell C. Holslag in *Movie Makers* Vol. IX, P. 371. A small camera crane also has been made available for advanced 16mm. movie makers.

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Since the camera followed her from the beginning of the incident, the audience will get the feeling of being led into the story, and the sequence to come will have had a better "build up." In this case, the treatment would have been almost as effective if there had been no actor in the scene. Had the camera surveyed the home, glided up the steps and down the hall, pausing finally before the closed door, the audience would be almost as expectant and curious concerning what lay behind the door.

Probably the most common and serviceable use of the traveling camera is in following a moving character when action is taking place that is of dramatic importance in the story. Frequently, in such cases, to split the action into a series of static shots would result in an arbitrary break in continuity or would require a comparatively forced and perhaps artificial handling of the situation. For example, Bob Sinclair and Lucy Poole are in love and Bob has been urging her to leave her husband and to go away with him. A remnant of loyalty has kept Lucy faithful to her husband, but this evening at her party, Poole has gotten drunk and has insulted her bitterly before her guests. Bob, who has seen the incident, is dancing with Lucy and is trying to persuade her to leave Poole now. The camera follows them about the floor, as the other couples dance around them, and thus the play of emotion on Lucy's face and Bob's pleading can be presented in a close shot. Then, as they



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leave the dance floor together, the camera, trucking backward, could show the growth of Lucy's decision to go with Bob. Without the moving camera, it would be necessary to stage this scene off the dance floor, and it would not be possible to contrast so effectively the gaiety of the guests with the drama that was developing in their midst.

Another useful purpose is served by the traveling camera in moving from a medium or similar shot to a closeup, when the action in the scene is sufficiently important to require it. A cut from the medium shot to the closeup would save footage and screen time, but the traveling camera will hold the scene before the audience without interruption. For example, in a medium shot, Pendleton has been persuaded by his crooked lawyer to sign the contract and he goes to his desk, still thinking the matter over. When he is seated there, the camera moves to a closeup of him as he pauses, pen in hand. Or, in an advertising film, Mrs. Smith is being shown by a salesman how to control the cold in her new refrigerator. The camera moves forward to an extreme closeup of the demonstrator's hand as he manipulates the proper controls. In this case, the camera might withdraw again to show Mrs. Smith's reaction of interest and comprehension. With this technique, it is possible to establish a much closer relationship between the refrigerator controls and the explanation than it would be possible to create by cutting to the closeup. The ef-

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fect of absolute "connectiveness" produced by the traveling camera is often very helpful in publicity and scientific pictures.

The third general purpose served by the traveling camera is the function of decoration and variety. This application in the professional musical comedy and review pictures is too obvious and too far beyond the non theatrical worker to need comment. However, as is usually the case, the same idea can be applied on a smaller scale. For example, in an industrial film it might be necessary to include detailed studies of a series of still objects. Such scenes can be given added interest on the screen if the camera trucks forward for a close study and then moves backward again. The object itself might rest on a rotating table (out of camera range) which would turn during the camera movement. Similarly, in a welfare picture, after recording a general scene of children playing some game on the institution's grounds, the camera might single out one youngster and move to a closeup of his face.

But however arbitrary the use of the traveling camera as decoration, it always should apparently serve some purpose—to bring the audience to a closer view of the subject, to follow some action or character, or to carry the audience further into the story.

Usually the camera is moved horizontally directly forward or backward, and this type of movement is



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about all that the amateur can manage without special equipment. However, in the studios, the camera cranes can achieve almost any type of trucking shot. Sometimes the camera is moved at right angles to the action in order to obtain a side view of the characters as they walk forward. This shares some of the disadvantages of the panorama, for the background is likely to "dither."

In the script, a moving camera scene can be indicated simply by: *Camera trucks* to follow Daphne, or *Camera trucks* to a closeup.

*Double and multiple exposures*, the combination of more than one image on the film, achieved by more than one exposure of the same footage, are today used largely for the purpose of setting atmosphere and for creating a general impression rather than as a story telling device. At one time, this was the means whereby a popular actor played a dual rôle, but fortunately this idea was short lived. The double exposure was also used to present the day dreams or thought processes of a character in the scene; they took form in an upper corner of the picture while the character drowsed in his chair in the foreground. However, more acceptable methods of handling this type of sequence have been discovered.

Nevertheless, double exposure offers the movie maker an excellent method of combining related ideas with economy of screen time. For instance, in an industrial reel, it might be desirable to give an

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impression of the extensive distribution of a product. Shots of trains, boats and trucks, all moving in different direction, could be combined in one scene on the screen. In such cases, the images always should be associated and the combination should serve but one purpose, to which the preceding scenes have led.

*Prisms, cylinders* and various *distortion lenses* have a limited field in average amateur or non theatrical work. The prism is capable of repeating the same image many times on one frame, and, with it, decorative and impressive effects have been obtained—one dancer becomes many or one foaming tankard of beer is multiplied a hundred times. Decorative patterns of motion can be produced that will enliven almost any type of picture.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, all the other cinematic devices previously discussed, such as dissolves, fades and wipes, can be used in planning a scenario. Each of these serves the same purpose in a dramatic film as it does in a scenic or travelog and can be used in the same way. The following script, presenting a complete scenario of a short story, intentionally light and inconsequential, includes examples of the use of these devices and of all the points previously discussed in this chapter.

(This script is ready for amateur production.)

<sup>1</sup> Note: Prisms combined with other means of producing cinema illusions have been used with remarkable success by Dr. James S. Watson in his experiments with the motion picture as a pure art form, notably in his film, *Lot in Sodom*.



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### WATCHDOGS

#### *Credit titles*

#### *Scene Camera*

1. Semi closeup A downward angle showing the edge of a desk on which there is a white paper. A thumb comes into the scene, is pressed on the paper and leaves a black print. The hand withdraws from view. It again enters the scene, this time holding a magnifying glass which is raised up and down as if the unseen operator were focusing it.
2. Close Melvin is seated at the desk, littered with detective equipment ad lib., examining his thumb print through the magnifying glass. He makes another and then another, all of which he seems to admire equally well. Laying down his glass with a sigh, Melvin draws a well thumbbed letter from his pocket and leans back in his chair and reads it.
3. Insert Closeup of the letter which, in part, runs as follows:  
So we congratulate you on your graduation from the Griggs Detective School and, under separate cover, we are sending your diploma. We are pleased to hear that you have already opened your office.  
Sincerely,  
A. B. Grigg.
4. Close Melvin finishes reading the letter for the hundredth time, as evidenced by its handling, and leans forward, staring despondently off into space. He stirs himself and turns around, calling out:

Title 1. "Homer—bring me the mail."

5. Medium shot The other end of the office near the door where there is a much smaller and less pretentious desk

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—perhaps a plain table. Homer, a small, mild mannered man, is seated at the desk. He starts and looks around vacantly. He looks at the desk.

6. Medium shot Wider view, including both Melvin's and Homer's desks. Homer gets up and shrugs his shoulders, dejectedly saying:

Title 2. "Now, you know that the postman didn't leave any letters . . ."

7. Medium shot Little nearer than Scene 6. Melvin raps the desk impatiently, gets up and strides away from his desk and generally indicates the strong man held in leash. He paces back to the desk and picks up a newspaper lying on it. Looks at it, snorts and raps it with his hand, saying:

Title 3. "Not one reply from that ad yet!"

8. Same as 7 Melvin shakes the paper angrily. Homer comes forward placatingly, saying:

Title 4. "Now don't be unreasonable, Melvin; maybe nothing's been swiped. Maybe no murders have been committed under mysterious circumstances."

9. Same as 8 Homer shakes his head dolefully and Melvin snorts that this is very unlikely. Suddenly, both men change. They hear something—something very startling.
10. Closeup Of a man's face. He is yelling at the top of his lungs.
11. Closeup Of hands beating on an office door.
12. Medium shot Melvin and Homer in their office as in 8. Homer draws near Melvin. Both men are in consternation.



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13. Close The door of the partners' office from the inside. It bursts open and Tobber, an older man of seedy appearance, sticks his head in, crying:

Title 5. "I am robbed! I am robbed! They are all gone . . ."

14. Medium shot Including Tobber, who has come in part way through the door, and Melvin and Homer. Homer shows an inclination to climb on Melvin for protection, but Melvin pushes him away and advances forward, while Tobber raises his hands and laments. Melvin comes forward past Homer and tries to quiet Tobber, following him out, reassuring him in his best professional manner. Homer follows timidly.
15. Medium shot In the hall outside of the office. Tobber, still lamenting, walks out of the door, followed by Melvin, who by now has completely mastered himself and is presenting a dominating front, soothing Tobber. Homer comes last, looking very perplexed.
16. Medium shot Same hall, but in front of a different office. The door is open, Tobber, Melvin and Homer, last, come into the scene. Tobber is a little quieter but still protesting about his misfortunes. They all enter.
17. Close A small safe in Tobber's office (a receptacle such as a steel locker would do). The door is open and things are strewn in front (ad lib.), signaling a hasty ransacking.
18. Medium shot Wider view of the safe and the office (non-descript variety). Tobber, Melvin and Homer come into the scene. Tobber points dramatically to the safe and Melvin hastens forward. Homer stands on one foot and then on the other. Tobber,

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hovering about, making a gesture of despair speaks:

Title 6. "Twenty four fine Swiss watches gone while my back was turned—I have been made a pauper!"

19. Same as 18 Tobber continues wailing. Homer tries to quiet him while Melvin steps up to the safe and gracefully examines it with a magnifying glass. He turns to Tobber:

Title 7. "We can handle this for you—if you will let us. We have never failed yet!"

20. Close Tobber and Homer over Melvin's shoulder, showing him as he turns back to the safe. Tobber looks incredulous but Homer reassures him, evidently recounting some of their abilities. Tobber shrugs his shoulders. He then seems to think of some difficulty and Homer answers him and explains it away. Tobber gives a gesture of resigned compliance and speaks:

Title 8. "I'll leave you in charge, then, but get into it, I've got to recover those watches!"

21. Medium shot Same setup as 20, but from the door toward the group. Melvin acknowledges the commission, indicating that he will give satisfaction. Tobber admonishes them again and clamps his hat on his head and walks toward the camera out of the scene. Melvin and Homer watch him go and see:
- Close Reverse angle. The door of the office closes.
22. Same as 21 Melvin straightens up. He is in charge. He rubs his hands. He surveys the office. He walks toward the safe and back again. He admires it



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and he congratulates himself. Suddenly recalling that he is a professional detective in full possession of the field, he turns on the slightly bewildered Homer and gives him a flood of directions, ticking off items on his fingers. Homer turns dutifully and leaves the scene, walking past the camera out. Melvin turns toward the safe.

23. Medium In Melvin's office, showing Melvin's desk. Homer is in the scene packing up various items of the detective's craft in a plain black bag—magnifying glasses, card records, a camera and other oddments ad lib. He hesitates and then opens the drawer and draws out a large artificial beard which he hurriedly claps into the bag.
24. Close Melvin at the safe in Tobber's office. His coat is off and he is down on his knees studying it. He is taking notes.
25. Medium shot Same scene and action as 24, but wider view. Homer comes into the scene and dumps the bag before Melvin, who opens it proudly and starts to draw out items. Dissolve to:
26. Medium shot Mr. Tobber walking along a city street. Wipe to (or cut):
27. Close Mr. Tobber coming to a stop in front of a building. He pauses and looks up. Wipe to (or cut):
28. Close Of Mr. Tobber who is seated, hat in hand, on a visitor's chair before a formal desk. Only this desk and the wall or a window are in the scene but the set suggests a large efficient office. An efficient looking middle aged man (or woman with severe eye glasses on a ribbon) is reading a document while Tobber appears apprehensive. The

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official returns the document to Tobber abruptly saying:

Title 9. "Your policy appears to be in order, but you will have to call in the police before this company can consider payment on your loss."

29. Same as 28 The official smartly returns the policy to Tobber, washing his hands of the matter. Tobber seems disappointed and gets up to leave. Dissolve to:
30. Close Tobber's office (shooting toward the front of safe). Melvin is in the scene blowing black powder on the surface of the safe. He holds a slip of paper in his hand on which the powder rests and it comes off in puffs as he blows (use a small amount of lampblack). Melvin turns sidewise toward the camera as he works and his face is shown blackened and dirty. He leans down to pick up something.
31. Closeup Of the floor on which is strewn a medley of objects, among them a flashlight and camera. Melvin picks up a flashlight.
32. Same as 30 Melvin examines the result of his labors with the flashlight. He picks up another object from the floor; it proves to be a camera.
33. Medium shot Same scene as above from a different angle, but including Homer anxiously watching. Melvin has the camera in his hands and proceeds to photograph the smudges of black powder with elaborate business. He wipes his brow and continues. He lays down the camera and casually leans against the safe.
34. Close Melvin resting from his labors, his hand on the safe. His outstretched thumb leaves a large and



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obvious print when he draws his hand away to wipe his brow again. He speaks, gesturing toward the floor:

Title 10. "Pack up this stuff, Homer, while I take a look around."

35. Close Reverse angle—toward Homer over Melvin's shoulder. Melvin nods and commences to clear up the mess. The black bag is in the scene and he starts to put things away in it. Melvin leaves the scene. Homer picks up the camera.
36. Close Shooting toward the safe. Homer has the camera in his hands and he looks at the safe, which clearly shows a large finger print. Homer snaps his fingers and from his pocket he draws his own magnifying glass (a smaller one than Melvin's). He studies the print in an imitation of Melvin's manner and then pockets the glass with great satisfaction.
37. Closeup Melvin at a window. He is picking up a hair from the windowsill which he carefully puts in an envelope. He continues searching.
38. Medium shot The office from the door. Near the foreground, and consequently near the door, there is a black bag, much like the one that Homer is closing near the safe. Melvin is in the background holding a magnifying glass to his eye as he looks over the window. Homer, finished with packing up, carries his bag toward the camera. He pauses and beckons to Melvin, who shrugs his shoulders helplessly—the exact scientist disturbed in his labors. However, he puts his glass in his pocket and comes toward the camera.
39. Medium shot Reverse angle. The door from the inside. Homer, in the scene, puts down his bag beside the

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other one and stands waiting for Melvin who comes into the scene very pompously. Melvin walks through, pauses at door and summons Homer to hurry along and exits from the scene. Homer is a little exasperated, he shrugs his shoulders, looks out and stares. He sees:

40. Medium shot Hallway from the door. A pretty stenographer has paused in the hall. She stares past the camera for a moment and walks slowly on.
41. Close Homer from inside. He is absorbed, staring out into the hall as he automatically reaches for the bag. He picks up the wrong bag, stands for a moment and sighs, still staring after the girl. Then he exits.
42. Medium shot In front of Melvin's office. Homer, carrying the bag, comes into the scene in which the girl is to be seen in the background. He pauses in front of the office door and stares. The girl laughs openly at him and contemptuously turns into another office. Homer sighs and goes on into the office. Dissolve to:
43. Close Of Tobber and another man walking toward the camera on a city street. (The camera trucks backward during the scene.) Tobber is anxiously and laboriously explaining things to the other man, a big burly chap who is chewing a cigar and pushing Tobber along by the elbow. The stranger drops Tobber's arm and throws back his coat carelessly. A prominent police badge is revealed. Dissolve to:
44. Medium shot Inside Tobber's office. Tobber is showing the detective the safe. The detective looks around contemptuously as Tobber explains about the



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robbery. The detective sniffs, raising his hands to silence Tobber, saying:

Title 11. "Who's been bungling around here—destroyin' evidence?"

44. (Cont.) The plainclothes man finishes speaking and waits impatiently for a reply which Tobber offers in full with many gesticulations—pointing out of the door, etc. The detective silences him nervously, saying:

Title 12. "Humph! Amateurs—you ought to've had better sense . . .!"

44. (Cont.) Tobber explains some more but the detective turns toward the safe.

45. Close (Flash) Melvin at his desk working over his evidence, frowning heavily and looking about for inspiration.

46. Close (Flash) Homer, seated in a chair in another corner of the room, his head in his hands, staring moodily in the direction of the master genius of the concern.

47. Medium shot In Tobber's room, toward the safe. The detective, who has been squatting to examine the safe, rises and dusts his hands and looks toward Tobber who is waiting, cowed in the background. The detective casts a contemptuous look about and speaks:

Title 13. "Somebody has been trying to hide finger prints but he left one good plain one—show me those amateur dicks!"

48. Medium shot Another angle. Tobber gestures outside of the office, indicating that he will conduct the officer.

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The detective dusts his hands again, smiles around at the office in a satisfied manner and follows Tobber who leads him out of the scene.

49. Medium shot Melvin's office, shooting toward Melvin's desk with Homer in the foreground busy ruminating. The officer with Tobber in tow breaks into the scene and demands of Homer if he is the self styled detective. Homer points toward Melvin. The officer goes over to Melvin who rises very flustered.

50. Close Of Melvin and the officer. The officer is speaking; desk in background, paraphernalia ad lib.

Title 14. "What do you mean by blowing soot all over that safe?"

51. Close Different angle. Melvin is astonished. He steps backward saying:

Title 15. "Why—that brings out the finger prints . . ."

51. (Cont.) Melvin grows more pompous as he explains. He picks up a large book and says:

Title 16. "Here you are! It says in Grigg's Guide that a light application of . . ."

52. Medium Toward the desk. Melvin continues his discussion, picking up various things to demonstrate the processes of his art.

53. Close Of Homer scratching his head. He walks past the scene and camera "pans" to follow him to a corner of the office where the black bag is waiting to be unpacked. The camera ends the "pan" with Homer in a near medium shot. Homer sighs and laboriously lifts the bag to a chair away from the camera. He bends over it, opens it and then turns around in the direction of the camera with a



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wild look on his face. He turns back again and looks at the bag and sees:

54. Closeup (Flash) Contents of the bag which is open on the chair. It appears to be full of watches.
55. Close Different angle of Homer and the bag. He is puzzled and thunderstruck. He reaches down and lifts up a watch. He puts it to his ear as if to reassure himself that it is a watch. He drops it like a hot coal and turns to stare past the camera.
56. Medium shot (Flash) Melvin holding the detective spellbound with his explanations. They aren't noticing Homer.
57. Close Same as 55. Homer looks around. He doesn't know what to do. He makes the big decision.
58. Close Different angle. Homer starts loading his pockets with the watches, moving very furtively.
59. Medium shot Other end of office. Tobber and the officer listening to Melvin. The officer glowers at him. He looks down at Melvin's desk.
60. Closeup (Flash) Of the desk top where are the large finger prints on pieces of paper that Melvin made in his experiments.
61. Medium shot Same as 59. The officer straightens up and looks very hard at Melvin. He grabs him suddenly by the wrist, turns up his thumb and whips out a glass and looks at his thumb.
62. Close Officer looking at Melvin's thumb. He looks up saying:

Title 17. "Come along—you left your prints all over the place—you couldn't cover them all up!"

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63. Medium shot Officer drags Melvin forward. Tobber hangs nervously and excitedly in the rear. They come toward the camera and the officer suddenly points in Homer's direction.
64. Medium shot Different angle, including all in the front of the office. Homer throws up his hands in the confused impression that he is being held up. From one of his pockets there slips a watch which falls to the floor with a crash. All eyes follow it.
65. Closeup (Flash) Watch broken on the floor.
66. Medium shot Nearer than 64. The detective draws nearer to Homer, feels his pockets. He draws out another watch and then another and another. Two more fall out. The officer has been expecting this; his manner shows it. Fade out.
67. Close Fade in. Melvin and Homer behind bars. Melvin is broken up. Homer is disconsolate. The bars are represented by shadows (which may be cast by three or four poles or lamp supports). Homer sadly reaches in his pocket and to his surprise produces another watch. Melvin grabs it and throws it away, furiously. They relapse into silence. Pause. A prison attendant in a plain dress comes into the scene. He taps them on the shoulders and they arise hopelessly.
68. Medium shot A man in subdued business dress is standing in a plainly furnished room, against the wall. He is waiting. Melvin and Homer come into the scene with the guard. (It is the same man, or woman, that Tobber consulted about his insurance.) He extends his hand to Melvin and says:

Title 18. "I am happy to be the first to inform you of your release . . ."



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68. (Cont.)      Melvin looks at Homer and then back at the speaker, who continues:

Title 19. "All those watches were fakes. You gentlemen have exposed a cunning insurance swindler—Tobber."

69.    Medium      Closer, different angle. Same action. Both men  
     shot          are amazed. The man holds up his hand, continuing:

Title 20. "My company will send you a mark of its gratitude . . ."

69. (Cont.)      Melvin and Homer are overjoyed. The guard smiles. The representative of the insurance company bows his good day and the guard indicates the door in the background to Melvin and Homer who are not slow to take the hint. Fade out.

70.    Medium      Fade in. Melvin at his old desk, regarding his  
     shot          equipment, spread out before him. Homer breaks into the scene, shouting, "It's come. It's come!" He lays a package before Melvin, who looks up and says importantly:

Title 21. "From the insurance company?"

71.    Close          Homer indicates "yes" with excited nods and Melvin, scarcely less excited, proceeds to open the package. He uncovers a box and sees the contents which lay before him. Homer bends forward to see too, but what is in the box is hidden from the camera.

72.    Closeup        A very elaborate gold watch lying in ostentatious cotton swathing.

73.    Close          Melvin and Homer stare at the watch and then aghast at each other. Slow fade out.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHEN SOUND IS ADDED

THE fundamental principles of sound on film continuity are the same as those that apply to silent films. Sound, either in the form of music with a lecture or as lip synchronization, is an added factor that brings special considerations, but it does not change the fundamentals. It is still important to keep the camera mobile; variety in camera distance and viewpoint continues to tell the story; cinematic devices, such as the dissolve and trucking camera, persist in their usefulness and, in fact, serve exactly the same purposes that they do in the silent motion picture. All that one has learned in silent motion picture continuity remains helpful. Sound simply broadens the field and introduces new concepts to be added to the body of the old. Many of these, as will be seen, are but logical developments of silent continuity principles. If one follows the rule, to make the sound fit the picture rather than to make the picture fit the sound, he cannot go far wrong. The sound motion picture, at its best, represents welding audible and pictorial mediums in a unified whole, but always with the cinematic principles in control. The result is what might be called a cinematic treatment of both pictures and sound.



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There are a variety of ways that sound can be used with motion pictures and, since these several methods affect continuity and subject matter planning differently, it is useful to separate them into categories. First, there is the *lecture film*, in which sound recording may not be involved at all. The silent picture is planned for lecture accompaniment, the lecturer addressing the audience in person from the stage or from behind the projector by means of a microphone and loud speaker. Second, is the film with a musical accompaniment achieved by the use of a double turntable system and the selection of an assortment of suitable records of music and sound effects. With the double turntable, as so successfully demonstrated by Hamilton H. Jones, one may fade a portion of one record into a part of another and, in skillful hands, the effect of actual synchronization may be produced. With this system, it is practical to introduce spoken comment over the microphone, making the illusion of a talkie complete. Adroit manipulation of the records and timing of music and comment make the show in this instance. However, even with a minimum of skill, such a treatment can greatly enliven an industrial or scenic.

Third is the post synchronized sound on film picture. Of this type are many of the current theatrical short subjects in which the picture is presented with editorial comment and a suitable musical score. The pictures are made silent, although at talking picture

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speed (twenty-four frames a second) and are carefully synchronized with appropriate vocal comments and music in a studio. The whole is recorded on a single negative. Theatrical newsreels are tending more and more toward this type of presentation, since the comment on the field in the heat of the excitement has proved rather banal. This system allows a very careful planning and a studious selection of just what will be said, and consequently it is very useful in industrial and advertising pictures.

The fourth category is the picture made by autophone recording, using the facility of a 16mm. sound on a film camera on the market. The operator speaks into a mouthpiece on the camera, while the scene is being made, and his voice registers on the film along with the picture. Although this allows editorial comment only, and lip synchronization is, largely speaking, out of the question, it has the advantage of convenience and inexpensiveness. A very careful script is required, if the remarks are to have particular value, for rare is the person who can manage to be impressive or brilliant offhand while the camera is running.

Fifth, and last, is direct sound recording (done in 16mm. with a microphone model) which permits lip synchronization. The sound in the scene is registered by a microphone while the lens of the camera records the picture. It is, naturally, the ultimate in sound technique, for it makes possible any effect. One may present a dramatic scene with dialog, shift



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to music and change to editorial comment, if desired, while exact sound or music on location may be registered faithfully.

At present, all these methods are in vogue and promise to remain so, since each serves permanent needs. A lecturer who uses his films as an added attraction will not find it profitable to have them post synchronized, because he sells to his audience his presence and his personality as well as the material of the lecture itself. His address can be reduced readily to a sound track, but, if he did not accompany his films himself, he would lose a major part of his bookings. On the other hand, an industrial that serves some particular need in a silent version may be designed for a special showing. A musical accompaniment can be arranged easily and inexpensively with the double turntable system and an address can be added, all giving the effect of a complete talkie but without the considerable expense involved. Again, should this same film be sent out on the road, it probably would be desirable to record the whole on a sound track. Then, with the aid of a sound on film projector, the operator could present the complete show. The autophone recording is very inexpensive and convenient—just the thing for the amateur newsreel or scenic, while, of course, the microphone recording offers many additional advantages.

The first and third categories of sound treatments (namely, the film presented with a lecture in which

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the narrator appears in person and the film that is post synchronized with a narrative) have a great deal in common. Although the personality of the lecturer combined with his actual presence on the rostrum may have some slight effect on the total result, it is safe to say that the relationships between picture and speech are the same in both cases. The really first class lecture that is delivered from a platform, along with the screening of the picture, would make a really first class narrative accompaniment for permanent recording. Indeed, one experienced movie maker developed his narrative accompaniment and tried it, with the projection of the film, several times on varying audiences before he had it permanently recorded on a sound track. As a result, his final recording included many changes and corrections that were discovered during the preliminary presentations of the picture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note: A similar procedure was used in the first, complete 16mm. post synchronized talkie, *The World's People* (a human interest film of the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago), produced by Edmund Zacher and Herbert Johnson, the narration and musical score for which was prepared by James W. Moore. Although in this case, the narration was written with unusual care and skill, several minor adjustments were made as the result of trial presentations before the film was synchronized with sound on film. The producers of this film discovered that smoother and generally superior results were obtained by hiring a professional announcer to read the script into the microphone rather than to attempt it themselves. The services of these men are available at reasonable rates at recording laboratories. Their previous work should be investigated, however, since a poor reading can utterly destroy the tempo and climactic effects achieved in a well written narration.



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It is in such experimental technique that the amateur and the individual non theatrical movie maker have a great advantage over the professional, and it is wise to make full use of it. Whether the subject of the picture be an industrial study, a welfare drive or an exploration in South America, if practical, try the narrative accompaniment out on several audiences of differing types before recording it finally on a sound track. If you are new at working out combinations of sight and sound, the results of these experiments will be invaluable. In silent work, it is cheaper to experiment on paper than with film and, in sound work, it is much less expensive to experiment with addresses given to small audiences than it is with post synchronization. Recording a sound track is a relatively expensive business, and one should be pretty sure of the resultant effect before committing himself irrevocably.

Since film narratives which are given in person and those that are recorded on a sound track have so much in common, they will be discussed together. A picture is planned for a lecture accompaniment in much the same way that it is planned for a silent presentation, except that scenes should be a trifle longer to allow more leeway in editing and that descriptive titles are no longer imperative to make points clear. Longer footage is useful, because the desired accompanying comment may require greater time than the normal duration of the scene. It may

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be advisable to enlarge the discussion of some process in the narrative accompanying an industrial scene or to include a historical anecdote during a travel shot. If the footage is not sufficient to allow this, the narrator has two choices; he may allow the discussion to overlap the next scene, which may be very undesirable, since the picture may deal with an entirely different subject, or he may cut down the discussion—the only workable solution. Because of the shortness of footage, consequently, it is possible that valuable narration may be sacrificed.

For this reason, the cameraman should know roughly what is to be said in the lecture that is to accompany the finished film. It is not desirable to write out the narrative script in advance with exactness, because the facility of editing the two together is one of the greatest advantages of this method of treatment. However, if the movie maker has a rough idea of important points, he can allow extra footage for those scenes. Some waste will occur in trimming certain of the scenes that do not require the additional footage, but the freedom to work out a happy combination in editing is well worth the slight loss.

It is evident that, although the sequencing of a lecture or narrative film is very similar to that of a silent film, since the same rules for the variation of camera position from medium shot to closeup still apply, yet certain scenes may last longer on the screen to allow for a suitable vocal or musical period.



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Assuming that a silent picture has been made and that it is to be presented with narration, either in person or by post synchronization, the first step would be to edit the film roughly, leaving full footage for each scene but arranging the shots approximately in the order that they will appear in the finished picture. Study the picture on the screen and work out the lecture accompaniment, jotting it down. Perhaps several repetitions of this process will be necessary to produce a fairly smooth narrative. Music may be mixed in as a background for the speech and, on occasions, it will swell out to take the place of speech. Certainly, a musical introduction will be desired. Suitable excerpts may be selected from records, and these would be noted on the rough, working script. A double turntable arrangement combined with a mixing panel and a microphone will provide a very convenient means of rehearsing the combination of movies, speech and music. With this arrangement, a selection from one record can be faded into another or the music can be softened to allow the speaker's voice to rise above it. All possible variations and combinations of effects can be tried and tested.

During this rehearsal period, the narrative will be shortened and will take rough form. Less important parts will be sacrificed for momentary silence or strains of music which may carry the theme more effectively than any words could do. With the improved narrative as a guide, edit the picture by

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shortening some sequence, readjusting other sequences and perhaps eliminating some shots altogether. During this process, rehearse each sequence with its accompanying sound, narrative or music, as the case may be. It will be found particularly convenient to deal with the picture, sequence by sequence, as one would edit and refine the paragraphs of an article, for, by working this way, the picture may be handled in so many units, each unit a complete entity when it has been finished. Of course, the narrative and musical cues will be committed to paper as soon as they reach their final form, while a final rehearsal will be given each sequence after it is recorded.

<i>Cue</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Music and sound effects</i>
Distant view of Multanomah Falls	"Not so spectacular as the great Niagara nor so delicate in beauty as Bridal Veil, Multanomah Falls has a delightful character of its own," etc.	Shubert's <i>Erl-Koenig</i> at background volume
Cars on the highway	"Winding by the river, the Columbia Highway unfolds a scenic panorama, stirring in its grandeur," etc.	Continue
Long shot of the gorge		Shubert's <i>Erl-Koenig</i> rises to full volume



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After all the sequences have been completed with their accompanying sound, a final rehearsal should be held. If music is used, the double turntable is invaluable. Indeed, there is no other practicable way to estimate the final effect of the post recorded film without it, unless one can afford to hire a special orchestra to work over a dress rehearsal. Even were the final recording of music to be made by means of an orchestra rather than re-recording phonograph record selections, it still would be more economical and just as efficient to use a parallel set of records for the preliminary rehearsals and trials. The double turntable will allow several tryouts with various audiences, during which it is possible to catch minor flaws and to estimate the effect of the combination of sight and sound. This is most advisable, particularly in the case of industrial, advertising and publicity pictures. Doubtless minor showings can be arranged before the final presentation of the picture and, during those, the movie maker can improve the less obvious details and perfect the combination, after which he would take himself to a recording studio and have the combination of movies, music and narration recorded on a sound on film track. This procedure is being followed by a number of industrial concerns using sound motion pictures in advertising campaigns. It is working out well, and surprising results can be obtained for an equally surprising small cost.

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As the movie maker, who is new to sound, experiments with it, he will be more and more impressed by the fact that a continuous flow of words with pictures is inadvisable. The brightest narrative will become monotonous and the audience will yearn for a period of silence. The fact is that narrative accompaniment tends to direct and control audience attention, and a continuous or even long extended period of it will strike a deep chord of resentment. If the speaker were present in person, he could sense the growing restlessness and would compensate for it. However, the sound track has no discrimination and will reproduce faithfully what is put on it. Accordingly, the well planned sound lecture film will have less narrative than might be acceptable, rather than run the risk of having more. In short, it is best to talk too little than too much. There should be fairly lengthy pauses. Sometimes these pauses may be profitably filled with music, since music tends to stimulate imagination rather than to direct it. But silence may be even more effective in other cases, and periods of complete silence always are more acceptable than a continuous, unceasing flow of words. It is in educational and publicity pictures that the temptation to ceaseless narrative is sometimes irresistible, but it is precisely in such films that well spaced silences are most important. In talking, as in silent continuity, the pause is frequently more dramatic and forceful than activity.



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Usually there should be a pause at the opening of a new sequence, for it is difficult for the audience to absorb simultaneously both a new visual and a new vocal impression. If there are a few seconds for the audience to adjust itself to the new thought pattern, presented on the screen, then it will be more receptive to the new word images. If the new sequence requires advance preparation, then a title might be used, for it can convey the essential facts to the audience without making it aware of a new medium. The title serves to provide a pause in the flow of visual image, too; it adds variety and makes a convenient break with which to introduce a new musical theme. In short, there are five ingredients in narrative-cum-music talkie films: *movies, speech, music, silence and titles.*

There follows a portion of a script combining these elements. Here, the scenes are described fully in order to give a more complete picture of the final effect on the screen, while, for compactness, the musical and sound effects are included with the narrative. As an outline of directions for final recording, the form given above probably will be more convenient. However, from this form it is very easy to prepare a schedule of directions for the laboratory and the announcer.

## WHEN SOUND IS ADDED

### ACTION

### SOUND

#### 1. *Medium shot:*

Sea waves piling through a narrow opening in a rock along the sea coast; they fill the view with spray and then subside.

*Music:* Passage from *Fingal's Cave.*

#### 2. *Long shot:*

Down the rocky sea coast, with the waves beating the rocks in the immediate foreground and piling up on the shore beyond.

*Music:* Passage from *Fingal's Cave*, continued.

#### 3. *Close shot:*

Of the rocks over which the waves beat, withdrawing to leave deep, momentarily placid pools and then to come again to cover them with spray.

*Music:* Passage from *Fingal's Cave*, continued. It fades to background volume.

*Voice:* Beneath the fury of this warfare between sea and shore, there is a world of delicate beauty and charm.

#### 4. *Close shot:*

Beneath the water, the scene shows sea anemones, their fronds waving in the currents of water, that are gentle and placid.

*Voice continues:* Here live the sea anemones, exquisite creation of the mysterious ocean, whence all life came. Although they would be torn by the



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### 5. *Closeup:*

Of a sea anemone beneath the water—a large stalk with trailing fronds gently stirring in the current.

pounding waves above them, down here they are safe. They are dressed in rainbow colors and no land flower knows the delicacy of their shadings nor the richness of their hues. And yet they are as treacherous as an undertow in a calm surf.

### 6. *Close:*

Another view of the bed of sea anemones. One large anemone in the immediate foreground. It has been disturbed, for it withdraws its tentacles and the "flower" closes in on some imaginary prey. Another sea anemone closes and then a third. The bed becomes alive.

*Pause.* (Music at background volume.)

### 7. *Medium:*

Larger sea anemones, tentacles writhing as a small fish darts near. The anemone suddenly closes with vicious quickness.

*Voice:* (Cue—the beginning of disturbance in the anemones). For they are not plants but animals—hungry flowers of prey that seize the sea life which the waves and the ocean currents bring them. They close on the luckless tiny fish and make a dinner of him—they are beautiful but dangerous, for the delicate, flowerlike fronds conceal mouths that are always hungry.

### 8. *Medium shot:*

*Pause.*

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Bed of anemones in motion.

*Voice:* It is "dog eat dog" in the depths of the sea and, although these treacherous flowers of the deep are anchored to the rocks, they do their share of eating.

*Music:* *Fingal's Cave* fades in from the last passage and increases in volume.

### 9. *Close:*

Another view of anemones, with the largest yet shown.

*Music continues.*

### 10. *Close shot:*

Same scene as No. 3, from a different angle.

*Music continues.*

Note that, while the comment is *about* the action pictured on the screen, it does not describe it directly. It gives additional facts—information that the picture could not give. The narrative amplifies the picture but does not recapitulate its subject matter. An effort is made to extend the field of the imagination of the audience, to stimulate interest rather than merely to duplicate the contents of the picture by descriptive matter. This rule of procedure paral-



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lels that of titles in silent pictures—one should not “tip off.”

For example, with a sequence of bronco busting in a rodeo film, it would be deadly to listen to the following comment:

“Now the cowboy is going to ride the wild bronc brought in off the range. He is getting on the horse. See the men holding him. They are letting go—watch him buck! There! he fell off!”

Here the speaker tells exactly what is being shown on the screen and mercilessly recapitulates every detail as if his audience had no eyes. On the other hand, there is the equal danger of going too far afield in the narrative. One cannot depart from the subject in the manner of the after dinner speaker, who says, “And this reminds me of an adventure in Alaska, etc., etc.” If the narrative leaves the subject, the attention of the audience is split between the speech and the picture and, being divided in an effort to follow both, it will succeed in following neither. For example, imagine a beautiful sequence of the redwoods, with the following comment:

“These beautiful trees awed the early settlers in this region, who had never seen forest giants like them. The settlers made their homes from the lesser pines and spruce. They hunted deer in the mountains and did some fishing in the rivers and the sea. Theirs was a bitter struggle for existence in this forest, for at that time the pumas were not the cow-

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ardly, slinking creatures they now are. They would kill or maim the lonely pioneer child if he wandered alone. These trees are . . . etc.”

While the hardships of the pioneers make a dramatic tale, the story does not complement the scenic studies of the redwoods—it carries the minds of the audience far back in time and away from the grandeur that their eyes are recording. The inevitable result is that neither narrative nor picture receives due attention.

The well planned narrative will intrigue the audience and will stimulate a closer attention to the picture on the screen. Accordingly, it must be planned to “point up” the scene and to key reactions. To a certain extent, the audience will see in a picture what the speaker wants them to see. For example, in a scene of a murky sea bottom, a shadowy form is shown in the middle distance. By saying, “The tiger of the deep is lurking near . . .,” the commentator will draw attention to the form, and some inkling of its meaning will be introduced. This increases the dramatic implications of the scene and adds to its interest. Note that this is not “tipping off,” for, without this comment, the audience would not realize the significance of the shadow and, in addition, the announcer does not baldly state, “The shadow is a dangerous shark, lurking near.” He simply directs attention and influences imagination.

It is wise to be very chary of direct comment, such



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as: "Here is a big fish!"; "At last, on top—it was a hard climb but worth it!"; "Oh-h-h, there he goes—through the rail and over—another sacrifice to speed!" etc. Such definite, concrete appeals to audience attention have a staccato value and greatly enhance the drama of the pictorial spectacle. But, if supplied in profusion, they tire one. They should be reserved for climaxes and for film "punctuation." In some professional news reviews, they are pretty steady fare, but one should remember that the news-reel deals with timely, human interest material that permits and even requires a headline treatment that is entirely out of keeping with the average scenic, travel or industrial picture.

"Gags," "cracks" and various witty, sarcastic references have but a temporary value. They are ephemeral and very few can handle them well. If they are not good, they are rotten. There is a certain skill in timing them that makes all the difference between real cleverness and flat failure. With the "gag," wit is not enough. There is no reason why the narrative film should be deadly serious, but it is questionable if the average homespun "gag" will improve it greatly in that respect. Better, a consistently light and casual approach, a general willingness to spare the audience statistics and unimportant details and a real enthusiasm for the subject than all the "gags" that could be contrived.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHORT SUBJECTS WITH SOUND

**P**HONOGRAPH records offer the amateur movie maker an enormous library of the world's music as accompaniments for his films. Great music, descriptive music, stirring marches, dances, songs and native airs can be found that will fit almost any movie scene conceivable, while remarkably convincing sound effects are available on discs.

The records may be played on ordinary phonographs when careful "cueing" is not desired; they may be played with the double turntable, already mentioned, and thereby cued exactly to the film; they may be played on the turntable and the music and sound may be recorded on film in one of the laboratories that are prepared to do this work. One must hear such an arrangement to realize how nearly like a specially written musical score it can seem. By carefully choosing excerpts from records, fading from one record to another, mixing, when desired, and fitting in sound effects, one can create a symposium of sound that would appear to have been composed especially for the purpose.

However, such a presentation entails considerable care and acquiring a definite technique. Not only



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must the records be cued exactly with the narrative, but also the music must be such as to amplify the mood of the picture rather than to combat it. A dreamy waltz would not fit an energetic scene of wrestling, nor would a swinging march help to create the desired mood for a scenic shot of cows grazing in a meadow. Some music has definite significance for many people, a significance that may not be immediately apparent. Yet no exact rule can be adduced; the preparatory scoring is a matter for taste and trial. Preliminary tests before varied audiences will be very revealing.

More definite rules regarding the use of sound effects can be presented. If there is to be simulation of real sounds—whistles blowing in synchronization with a scene of a whistle, the sound of an approaching train accompanying the appropriate scene, etc., then the film footage must be cut carefully to match the sound on the record. There must be a very exact cue to mark the beginning and the end of the sound effect so that the person manipulating the records and turntable can turn up the volume at the precise moment and not a second sooner or later. Usually this cue will be the opening of the scene, but sometimes it will occur in the middle of a scene, as in the following example:

Scene: Close shot of the camp-fire, with the coffee pot bubbling against the coals.

Sound: Boiling water

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*Cue:* The lid of the pot begins to dance and the coffee boils over.      *Sound:* Frying

If the frying sound commences too soon, it would be unnatural and would kill the effect; if it begins too late, it would give the show away.

Sometimes sound effects can be lowered to background volume and may be continued throughout a sequence. For example, in a parade picture, a near shot of an active crowd might carry with it a fairly loud crowd noise which would be reduced in volume and continued throughout other scenes of the parade. In other instances, the sound effect must fade out promptly with the shot. In a farm picture, for example, the sound of hens cackling must not overlap the shot of the pigs.

So convincing are the recorded sound effects that the beginning experimenter with synchronized personal films is likely to overdo them. In fact, he may go so far as to shoot and edit his picture around them and, obviously, if one does this, he is likely to wear the idea threadbare. Sound effects that simulate real sound should be treated like strong flavoring and must be used sparingly. The first crowd noise in a shot of Broadway is a knockout, but the fifth or sixth scene with the same effect is less appealing than if it had been restfully silent.

The "newsreel type" of single system sound on



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film camera that is available to the 16mm. movie maker involves special considerations, for, although it is the simplest to operate of all sound on film cameras, its very mechanical simplicity necessitates intelligent handling to get the best results. When this sound camera is held in the hands so that the view finder is in proper position with reference to the eye, a mouthpiece in the back of the camera will be found to be in a convenient position before the lips of the operator. While the camera is running, the operator speaks into the mouthpiece and his voice is recorded on the sound track as the scene itself is being registered on the film. Thus, with the greatest of convenience, one can record a narrative or editorial comment along with the picture. All the complexities of post recording are eliminated, for, when the film comes back from the processing station, both sound and scene are registered on it, ready for projection in a 16mm. sound on film machine.

Although, with this equipment, the voice is recorded on film at the same time as the scene, yet, of course, the same admonition and advice as to treatment of narrative will apply as in the case of post recording. For example, a continuous flow of speech will be found to tire the audience; a new sequence should be introduced with a pause in the flow of comment; titles may be used effectively to balance the film and to provide pauses; the narrative should not cover the same ground as the picture but should

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give information that the picture does not; yet the comments should be held to the picture and not be allowed to wander too far afield. In short, the effect on the audience of a combination of picture and speech is just the same whether it is achieved by means of post recording or whether it is accomplished by speaking directly into a mouthpiece of camera or microphone as the picture is being made. Of course, unless sequences made in some other way are cut in, there will be no question of music, for the newsreel type of sound on film camera will pick up only the voice of the operator. However, interesting and entertaining pictures can be made with this easily operated equipment.

If silent movie making requires careful advance preparation, sound on film movie making requires it doubly. If pot shots cannot achieve the audience appeal of a carefully planned picture, ad lib. comment can never create the interest of intelligently considered, pointed remarks. There are two reasons for planning an "autophone" sound movie. There is always the temptation to leave such planning until the last minute, with the thought, "I will think of something to say when the time comes." But, unfortunately, unless the movie maker is particularly gifted, inspiration is not likely to visit him on the spur of the moment and the clever comment may become a series of "Ah's," "Er's," varied throat clearings and uncertain sounds, ending with a lame and obvi-



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ous remark which will tell the audience no more than exactly what they will see on the screen.

The dilemma of not knowing what to say and the consequent embarrassment of saying nothing of importance can be avoided easily and completely by working out a narrative script along with the movie plan. If one is to film a controllable subject, such as a scenic wherein the material is unchanging or, say, a laboratory procedure wherein the action can be rehearsed and duplicated exactly, it is practical to write a very exact, scene by scene scenario for both picture and sound. Such a scenario and narrative cue sheet would be very similar to those given as examples for post recording. Although the comment will be registered on film at the same time as the picture, if the subject can be controlled, it is possible to get materially the same results as in post recording.

However, the average movie maker does not plan his films so exactly in advance, nor can the subject matter usually be controlled so carefully. Bobby in the backyard will not perform perfectly to schedule, nor will the lodge parade occur just as was anticipated. In the great majority of movie subjects, there must be opportunity for a last minute adjustment, and plans must be subject to modification to a greater or less extent. For that reason, an exact, scene by scene script with a narrative timed to the second will not serve the average movie maker using the autophone or newsreel camera. The best procedure is

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to follow the same general compromise common in silent movie making—and to prepare rough notes of what to say as well as what to film. A few ideas and definite facts, jotted down on paper and ready for a glance before taking the camera in hand, will make all the difference between coherence and entertainment and a record of selfconscious embarrassment.

The important thing is to have something to talk about. Almost equally important is not to be afraid of silence. Assuming that the movie maker is planning, for a family film, both picture and sound in advance, although not committing himself to a definite scenario, his note book might run something as follows:

Bill, Jr. (who is aged four) and Angus (a Scotch collie).

Get a medium shot of Angus in the garden, side lighted so his coat shows well. Get a different angle.

*Talk:* "Angus is pretty proud of himself, for he took the blue ribbon at the Meriden Kennel Club Show."

Take a close view of Angus lying down in front of his kennel.

*Talk:* "He has got his own house now and is only receiving the best collies and . . . (Get him to bark) if he doesn't like you, he doesn't like you! (Pause.) But he has one friend who is always welcome."



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Show Bill digging in the garden or playing with his wagon. Follow with a shot of him coming up to Angus in front of his kennel. Have Bill pet Angus.

*Talk:* "There's a nice social visit . . . and affection!"

If Angus licks Bill's face, so much the better. (He probably will.) Call Bill out of the scene and then show him again digging or playing with his wagon. Cut back to a close view of Angus (having given him a bone in the meantime).

*Talk:* "Angus doesn't always dine at home . . . but he rarely has a guest to dinner!"

Take another shot of Angus gnawing the bone.

*Talk:* "Some of our friends say that they don't know whether the family pays more attention to Bill or to Angus . . ." Pause. (Continue with scene of Angus.) "But there is somebody who knows the real answer."

Follow with a close shot of Bill.

Admittedly this narration would not add any vital data to the picture; yet, the tone of the voice and the comment itself would give the film a pleasant and rather intimate touch. No ability is required to work out comments as good or better than this, and yet examination of the combination of picture and speech will show that the speech has given meaning

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and continuity to the whole. It ties the picture together pleasantly and casually. Unfortunately, this casual and light touch is lost if one tries to develop it on the spur of the moment. With a rough outline in his pocket, the cameraman knows that he will have something to say and he can be sure that this something will aid and enforce the picture's continuity and interest sustaining qualities, for it *will have been planned with that in view*.

The more definite the information that one may impart in connection with a picture, the easier it will be to prepare remarks to go with it. When you have something to talk about, it is easy to talk. This has one disadvantage—there is a tendency to cling desperately to statistics. "That mountain is eight hundred and fifty feet high . . . ah . . . it has been climbed only once" represents the sort of film comment that one will produce if he is not careful. However, definite information and data of all types are invaluable in preparing a sound on film plan. Even if the information is old, its presentation in your own way, combined with the picture medium, will make something new of it. Travel filmers will find a wealth of material in their guide books and steamship folders, both of which will supply information for film comments. When filming a specific sport, say skiing, one will find that the simplest book on the subject will provide plenty of ideas for scene comment and an amazing technical vocabulary with



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which to enliven the picture. An encyclopedia or handy work of reference is a veritable gold mine for the movie maker who is blocking out remarks to accompany almost any film subject. To be sure, this information has been printed many times, but the chances are that it has never been epitomized and re-interpreted to go with a motion picture. If it has, it is extremely unlikely that the home movie audience will have heard it. This holds good for the larger audience of the non theatrical film in general.

It is axiomatic that, the more definite and concrete the subject matter and the continuity of the picture, the easier it is to plan an accompanying narrative. If the picture rambles and gets nowhere, the comment must necessarily ramble also. Thus talkies put a premium on the well planned picture which offers a neat, definite presentation of a given subject. It is notable that most of the theatrical short subjects are of this type; they cover a definite, limited field, usually a fairly simple topic, such as: Ireland is beautiful; here's how much fun it is to fish for sailfish; both baseball and golf require very steady nerves; where nature is bountiful, South Sea Islanders lead a happy, indolent life; the thrill of fishing really lies in the anticipation. Boiled down to their essentials, some of the most successful theatrical "scenic" films are based on just such simple themes as these. The individual movie maker would do well to follow this lead and, if he keeps the theme of his picture simple,

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he will find that planning the speech will be much easier. At the same time, he will be surprised at how enthusiastically his audience receives the limited theme. The reason probably is that, within the narrower limits, it is possible to give a fairly complete treatment, even though it is a restricted one.

Following this procedure, instead of making a picture of the whole golf club and its course, plan a study of the trickiest holes, telling the audience in the narrative accompaniment just why these holes are so difficult. Instead of making a long, rambling film of Yellowstone, produce two or three shorter pictures on particular subjects. One film, for example, would cover the geysers, pot holes and hot springs. The theme of both picture and narrative would be based on the natural phenomena that cause these manifestations. The guide books will tell the story, and perhaps a judicious question or two addressed to the guides themselves will elicit a less well known fact to ornament the film. To be sure, the essential facts of this subject are fairly well known, but it is a never ending drama and a ceaseless source of wonder. People will never tire of learning "why," via the sound track, until the geysers cease to function.

Don't be afraid to ask questions of others when preparing a newsreel sound narrative, especially in taking travel films. As a rule, people are pleased or even flattered to impart information, and a few ques-



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tions will bring forth astonishing material. The audience back home will be fascinated by what the north woods lumberman tells you of the methods of topping and falling the big timbers. You can easily anticipate some of the questions that your audience would like to ask the timber man, were they there, and you can serve as a vocal reporter for them. You would ask if the man working at a dizzy height to cut off the tops of the trees, before they are felled, ever makes a misstep and slips to his death, or you could ask if the giant trees ever crush any of the loggers when they fall. Reasoning would answer any of these questions, but the actual report of what was told to you will have the validity of a human document and all the drama that this implies.

If it is not possible to get local information when travel filming, one can still glean surprising data from travel guides or books, the encyclopedia, an almanac or even the dictionary. All the sources of information can be integrated together and "keyed" to the scenes. While every writer of narrative will seek the unusual and out of the ordinary to add dramatic interest to his product, he will find that the more prosaic and obvious material will do surprisingly well. For example, notes for the opening of a talkie study of Capri might run as follows:

Distant shot of Capri, followed by a closer view.

*Talk:* "Off the southern point of the beautiful blue

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bay of Naples lies the little island of Capri, scarce twelve miles in circumference."

Another shot of approaching Capri.

*Talk:* "Here, away from the heat of Rome, was the luxurious retreat of the ancient Roman emperors and here one of them, Tiberius, built a magnificent pleasure palace."

Long shot along the shore.

*Talk:* "Along these shores, Rome's great masters spent their frivolous moments, secure from the prying eyes of the Senate." Pause.

Another view of the rocky coast line. View of the ocean from the island, with a fishing boat in the foreground.

*Talk:* "From this sea came luscious Mediterranean fish for the imperial table, just as they come today." Pause.

Medium shot of fishing boat at dock.

In planning a picture for the single system 16mm. sound camera, whether the newsreel or the more elaborate microphone model, one must take into consideration one peculiarity involved in the synchronous production of sound and its associated picture on the screen. The picture and its accom-



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panying sound are registered on the film simultaneously *but* the sound is recorded on the film strip at a point twenty-five frames ahead of the picture. In short, sound and picture are recorded at the same time but in slightly different places. This is necessary because, while at the picture gate an intermittent film movement is required, at the point where the sound is recorded, a continuous flow of film is needed. The twenty-five frames provide the slack to allow the two different types of movement in the flow of the film.

The result is that, in the finished picture, the sound accompanying a given scene always is recorded twenty-five frames ahead of the scene itself. Thus, if the film strip is cut at the end of a scene, as in editing, the first clip will include twenty-five frames of the sound that goes with the following scene. In other words, if, in editing, one cuts at the end of the scene, he will have included with the shot twenty-five frames of the sound of the succeeding shot and thus will automatically deprive that following shot of the first twenty-five frames of its recorded sound.

If a roll of sound film is to be projected without editing, this situation causes no trouble. However, to plan a picture to be screened without intervening editing is an optimistic procedure, for, no matter how carefully sound and scene are plotted out in advance, some supplementary editing is necessary. Even if it is not necessary for continuity reasons, it is

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likely to be imperative because of such mundane considerations as simple over or underexposures. Even the best cameraman wants to be able to eliminate his mistakes!

The easy solution to this sound film planning and editing problem is to encase each scene in momentary silence. The sound and picture overlap is only twenty-five frames, scarcely more than a second at talking picture speed. A period of silence of one second is a welcome break at the opening of a new scene. The audience cannot grasp a new picture and new sound simultaneously and, even were it not advisable to handle single system sound on film pictures in this way, it yet would be desirable to do so from the viewpoint of audience psychology.

With a second or so of silence between shots, editing can be undertaken in the normal way; a cut at the end of a scene will not deprive the succeeding scene of any important sound. Scenes can be rearranged at will (or to such an extent as the dialog or comment will allow) and one will not be hampered in the quiet burial of shots that failed for one reason or another.

Obviously, this freedom is achieved by the simple process of arranging a pause in the sound at the beginning and the ending of each shot. In newsreel recording, with which we are now primarily concerned, this is done simply by not starting the comment immediately when the camera is started and ending



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the comment just before the button is released. With the microphone model, it is only necessary to arrange for momentary silence at the beginning and ending of scenes. In dramatic work, sometimes this is impossible, but, at the same time, in such cases, the sound may be such as to link the two scenes together naturally. Then, in editing, the two scenes would have to be treated as a unit of one.

Since there are but twenty-five frames between the beginning of the sound and the beginning of its accompanying picture, a single pause, either at the end of the first scene or at the beginning of the second is all that is strictly necessary. However, this might bring complications in editing the film, and it is wise to make a habit of pausing at both the beginning and end of all scenes. In filming with the news-reel model, one readily can make a habit of this procedure.

Of course, except for the psychological value of the pause, these considerations do not apply to the production of narrative or lecture films by means of either a double system sound camera or post synchronization. In the latter case, the principal caution is to remember to make the film at the talking picture speed, twenty-four frames a second.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TALKING PHOTOPLAY

UP to this point, in the discussion of talkie motion picture continuity, the consideration has been limited largely to voice or music that does not originate in the scene being filmed. The effects that have been discussed always can be obtained by post recording and do not require direct synchronization with movement in the scene. The most complete simulation of reality in talkie films, of course, is offered by direct or lip synchronization wherein the voices of actors in a scene are recorded simultaneously with their production and synchronously with accompanying facial movements and gestures. This method of recording, the basis of theatrical talkie photoplays for some years, is also available to the 16mm. movie maker through the microphone or studio type 16mm. sound camera, both double and single system. With this equipment, one may record sounds in a scene just as is done in Hollywood studios, although, of course, in the less expensive single system units, the sound system is considerably less sensitive and narrower in range than the very elaborate theatrical machines. This is perhaps as well, for the non theatrical filmer does not, in consequence, usually have the problem



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of silencing a host of minute, tiny sounds that are always about us and never noticed until a sensitive microphone picks them up. A bird chirping outside the window or a man rustling a paper in the next room are not the devastating circumstances to the amateur sound worker that they are to the theatrical worker.

Although the microphone type of sound camera allows recording of the sounds in the scene as well as the scene itself, it does not change the fundamental continuity considerations of the motion picture. Instead of changing the basis of picture planning, we have but added a facility. More complicated stories can be told with this medium, more dramatic effects can be obtained with the combination of sight and sound and more subtle situations can be presented with the aid of the emotional qualities of the voice.

Yet, the motion picture is still the motion picture, and a film story should be planned with an eye to the cinema and not the stage. Camera positions should be varied, sequences should be planned and the film must be pictorially interesting. The translation of the theme into motion picture terms is still important and, in short, an understanding continuity treatment still makes the picture.

The sound motion picture camera should be as mobile as the silent one, but the movie maker will face some temptation to limit his shifts in camera viewpoint. This is because the sound equipment is

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heavier than the silent and must be operated on a tripod. Changing viewpoints is bound to involve more trouble. Fortunately, shifting the microphone causes little difficulty, for it may be placed in hundreds of different positions and it may be included in the set itself. In moving from a medium shot to a semi closeup, it may not even be necessary to change the microphone position.

With a microphone camera, single or double system, one can record editorial comment concerning a scene, in addition to registering the sounds on the scene itself. In producing a talkie industrial, one might write out the narrative in advance and read the appropriate parts of it into the microphone while the camera is filming the associated scene. This procedure offers a very economical and convenient method of adding a lecture to a film, for, otherwise, the relatively expensive post recording would be required. Naturally it is also possible to intermingle with such sequences other sequences in which the sound from the scene is recorded on the film. Since, as a rule, the sound of the industrial processes is not important, this general procedure offers a very flexible method. When the sound of machinery or the hand operations has some significance, it may be recorded directly on the film and, when it has no particular value, it could give way to the voice of the lecturer who presents a running comment on the subjects.



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A plan for a film of this type might run as follows:

### ACTION

### SOUND

#### 10. *Medium shot*

Of milk truck at receiving room platform. Men are unloading the milk cans which pass on the conveyor into the receiving room.

#### *Voice:*

Early in the day, fresh from the morning milking, the supply comes from farms within a radius of twenty five miles from the condensory.

#### 11. *Medium shot*

Inside the receiving room. Worker is emptying the cans into the weighing tank and putting the empties in the washing machine.

#### *Voice:*

The milk is weighed as it is received, for the farmers are paid by a butter fat rate rather than by volume of fluid.

#### 12. *Medium shot*

Another angle of weighing tank, showing milk flowing in.

#### *Voice:*

There is lots of it but it is pure and fresh . . .

#### 13. *Close*

Show milk flowing from can into half full tank.

Place microphone to catch the thick gurgle of the milk flowing from a can.

#### 14. *Medium view*

Of receiving room. At-

#### *Voice:*

And the rigid course of

## THE TALKING PHOTOPLAY

tendant is at scales, in plant cleanliness begins background of tank, taking the weights. with the milk cans.

#### 15. *Medium shot*

Of the side of the washing machine, showing the cans being automatically washed, steamed, etc.

Place microphone to catch the hiss of steam as a can in line comes past the steam jet.

In shifting from scene to scene, it is very simple to pick up the microphone and to read the prepared script into it. Some of the background sounds will be recorded, but this will not be objectionable unless the manufacturing process is a very noisy one. Naturally, this arrangement is impracticable in a film of a foundry.

The same technique can be applied to talkie movies of such subjects as family sequences, vacations, picnics and sports; one may shift freely from lip synchronization to editorial comment. A record of a jaunt to the beach might open with scenes of Mother packing the baskets for the picnic lunch, the picture being accompanied by a narrative to tell where the family is going and to build up an atmosphere for the event. Then, later, the picture could shift to lip synchronization and the voices of members of the family may be recorded in the scenes of them.

It is important to plan what people are to say, for,



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if you leave it to the chance inspiration of the persons in the picture, you are likely to regret it. In silent movies, the subjects can spoil scenes only by the most obvious selfconsciousness but, in sound filming, they can do it with but a single gauche word. By all means, let them know what they are to say before the camera starts. It isn't necessary to arrange elaborate plots—or any sort of a plot, for that matter. However, the dialog should unfold the simple story behind the picture and, not only will such dialog be easier to plan, but it will also produce greater compactness and unity in the finished film. If the picture is about one thing and the dialog of the characters is about another, the effect of the finished film is bound to be unpredictable.

Suppose that a talkie picture is to be made of the garden, Aunt Kate's particular interest. A very simple continuity for both picture and dialog could be based on the incident of Aunt Kate showing a friend about the garden and expatiating on the various flower beds, borders and special plantings. Get Aunt Kate's help in planning the picture—she will know a lot of things to say and can suggest intelligent questions for the friend to ask her; in fact, she will probably welcome an opportunity to inspire the sort of questions that she would like to be asked, for any hobbyist would. What the friend is to ask and what Aunt Kate is to reply could be written on cards, with one card to each scene. Then, just before

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a specific shot is made, both of them can glance at the card and refresh their memories. One of these cards might look something as follows:

Shot of wall at end of rose garden.

*Friend:* "That mass of rambler roses is really stunning . . ."

*Aunt Kate:* "Yes, the Dorothy Perkins did well there, for the wall protects the bush from the wind and it gets the sun all afternoon. We had some time getting it started, but now you can see that it needs pruning."

In such a case as this, it may not even be necessary to write out Aunt Kate's replies fully. A key word may be all that is necessary to hold her part of the dialog together. The friend's questions would be indicated clearly, however. In some scenes, the friend would be silent and Aunt Kate would enlarge on her hobby and solicit the friend's interest in some esoteric horticultural triumph, while, in other scenes, Aunt Kate would remain silent and the friend would praise a special planting or border. Since they will look at the flowers and will have something of real interest to talk about, neither Aunt Kate nor her friend will be camera conscious or shy. A hobby or special interest of any type makes an excellent theme for a personal talkie film, since everybody concerned will feel that there is some serious and



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worthwhile point involved. Jack's motorcycle that takes all his spare time; Jerry's golf game; Ted's tennis club; Helen's horseback riding or Sally's diving are themes that should present their respective principals at their best. Plan the continuity of the picture in advance, write out the important dialog, jotting it down on cards, and, if practicable, hold a rehearsal before shooting each scene. Above all, remember that it is not hard to find things to say, if there is *something to talk about*. Provide your subjects with that something and remember that, if they are really interested in the subject, they will talk much more interestingly and assuredly.

Music and sounds other than the human voice will be helpful in planning personal sound on film pictures. The radio or phonograph, in most cases, and the piano or violin, if one of the subjects can play either, will furnish incidental music with which one can open a scene casually and in a fashion to put the characters at their ease. However, these devices may be used but a few times only or their purpose will become painfully transparent. But the talkie filmer also has recourse to a host of natural sound effects. Suppose that Margaret accidentally breaks a glass from the "five and ten" in order to furnish the dramatic motif for one domestic episode. While the camera shows the expression on Margaret's face, the microphone can pick up the tinkling crash of the shattering glass. This would, of course, be followed

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by a closeup of the broken glass on the floor, while Margaret (unseen) wails her regrets into the microphone. The incident would be very effective pictorially (indeed it usually is in silent movies) but it will be far more dramatic with the sound of the crashing glass.

Other sound effects need not be so destructive. The water splashing from the faucet, a ringing telephone bell (the alarm clock supplying the necessary sound), the clump of feet on a bare wooden floor, the swish of the cocktail shaker, the crackle of flames in the fireplace, all are sounds common in the home and easy to record on film in connection with appropriate action. Out of doors, the range is considerably larger, and the chug of the motor car engine, the neigh of the horse, the clatter of the lawnmower and the bark of the family dog will all serve their purpose. Properly used in the continuity, these sounds will help to tell the story and will give even more of an effect of a talkie in some cases than will the human voice itself. When working out a sound scene, look about for sources of pertinent sound effects; usually they are easy to control.

Sound, either voice or "effect," coming from outside the camera's immediate view furnishes an interesting method of handling scene shifts and reaction shots. For example, in the case of Margaret dropping the glass, described above, the sound of the glass is heard while Margaret's face is seen. We hear what is



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happening to the glass and we see what is happening to Margaret. In short, the sound track takes the place of a reaction shot, which is one reason why a talkie may be swifter and more dramatic than a silent film.

A scene in a home talkie might be of Bud polishing the car on the driveway at the side of the house. It has been established that he plans to take Jane for a drive and he is polishing the car cheerfully, whistling as he works. Suddenly a voice says: "Good work, Bud! I didn't know that you had such consideration for me!" Bud stops polishing the car and looks past the camera ruefully. The next scene would show Bud's father, his hat on his head and his coat over his arm, as Bud stands dismayed, polish cloth in hand. Dad climbs into the car. Here the voice coming from outside the scene enhances the surprise effect of the new development and the audience will feel the situation more keenly than if the father were shown at the same time the voice was first heard. Bud was surprised and the audience will be surprised too, for they don't see the father before he does.

In dialog work, the voice coming from outside the scene is a flexible short cut whereby one can further control effects. While one character is speaking, a closeup can present the reaction of another character or some view as seen by the eyes of either one of the two. Jack is talking to Mary. He is seeking to break their engagement, and the scene shows Mary's face

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as she and the audience hear Jack's voice. Or, Mary might be looking intently at a flower (it might have symbolic significance in the story) that lies in her hands and then, while Jack's voice continues, the picture would show a closeup of the flower in her hands as she slowly tears it to pieces.

Although dialog gives the talkie photoplay another story telling facility, the elements of plot construction are just the same for this medium as they are for the silent dramatic picture. A plot is a plot, whether it be presented as a silent picture or a talkie. Plot defects are, if anything, more apparent in a talkie than in a silent production. It is imperative that a talkie plot be well knit and logically developed, for inconsistencies and rambling treatment are very obvious.

Although dialog is very important in the presentation of a talkie, it is practical to approach scenarization in the same way that one would undertake a silent script. Pantomime still tells the important part of the story and, as a working basis, the talkie scenario may be regarded as a silent script with dialog added. Indeed, to the new worker in this field, any other approach is likely to lead to the production of a curiously written stage play. Action should carry the story and the dialog should supplement the action. Scene divisions—the shift from the medium shot to the closeup—lend emphasis and tell the story in a talkie, just as they do in silent photoplays.



## HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE

Many scenario forms have been used, and the precise style is a matter of convenience. A practical form, that could be followed easily on the typewriter and which may be applied either to photoplays or dramatic publicity pictures, is as follows:

*Fade in*

MAIN TITLE:

The wording is double exposed over a scene of a long jetty which juts out into the ocean. The waves climb over it and dash up spray in the foreground. *Music.*

CREDIT TITLES:

The background remains to fade out with the last of the series of credit titles. The music, instead of fading out, increases in volume with the first scene.

Scene

1. Long  
to shot  
6.

A deserted beach, wild in aspect. The heavy seas herald a storm. *Quick dissolve* to view down the line of the surf, to sea birds nesting on the rocks and rising as if disturbed, to the wind whipped beach grass, to the bull pines bending beneath the gale, to the birds circling over the rocks. The music starts to fade as this last scene darkens and *slowly dissolves* to:

7. Close

A muddy road at dusk, shooting downward to show a horse's hoofs

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plodding through the mud. It is raining and, as the music fades out, on *the sound track* can be heard the sound of the rain and the soughing "clops" as the horse raises and lowers its hoofs in the mud. The camera travels with the horse, and the rider is not revealed at first.

*Pan up* to show the rider astride the horse. He wears oilskins and a sodden felt hat, which is somewhat ludicrous. He is a young man with a determined air and he stares intently ahead. This is GORDON WEST, the engineer of the Blanco jetty and the promoter of the undertaking as well.

- |     |              |  |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 8.  | Long<br>shot | Of lights in the distant dusk, indicating what might be either a tiny village or a sprawling ranch.  |
| 9.  | Medium       | The road with the horse and rider. WEST is staring ahead, evidently at the lights. He urges the horse forward.   |
| 10. | Medium       | The exterior of a country general store, which appears exceedingly dreary in the rainy dusk, although lights shine out of its windows. There is enough light outside to perceive advertisements in the windows and a |



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dilapidated sign over the narrow porch which fronts the building. Suddenly, the door opens and the bright light streams out into the camera's field. A man slouches out and stands on the porch undecidedly. *On the sound track* can be heard the subdued pounding of the surf and, against this background, there is a sound of a horse coming nearer. As the man looks up, GORDON WEST rides into the scene.

11. Medium WEST is dismounting and he whips  
Another the bridle about the rail. He turns  
angle and sees the other man.

WEST: *with surprise*, "You here, Morse? I thought that you were working on the breakwater tonight."

MORSE: *with surly respect*, "They're running too high tonight, Mr. West. A fellow can't even keep a hold of the rock car." *His voice rises in a whine*. "And if you slip . . ."

WEST: *interrupting*, "Is the whole crew off?"

MORSE: "Yeah. Lissen to that sea . . ."

WEST doesn't stop to listen but turns from the man, pushes open the door and enters the store.

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12. Medium Interior of the store, shooting from the door. At one side is a dirty bar, against which an idler leans regarding the scene on the other side of the room. In the background are shelves stocked with the staples of a country grocery store, while, opposite the bar, a poker game is in progress. Some of the men in oilskins and sou'westers have just come in from the breakwater.

13. Close *Reverse angle to show* WEST. He is surveying the group at the table, anger mounting in his face. He strides forward.

14. Medium From the side, including the players at the table and WEST coming toward them. At the table, one of the players, a tanned and weather beaten man of middle years, looks up indecisively. This is SLANTER, boss of the rock dumping on the jetty. He handles his chips and waits for the other to speak.

WEST: *with subdued fury*, "You called the men off, Slanter?" There is silence at the table. The men look at their cards.

SLANTER: *persuasively*, "We can't work a night crew out there now,



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Mr. West. We don't want to lose nobody. The big ones are breaking clean over the cars . . ."

WEST: "Tonight's no worse than today was! Listen to me, Slanter, we've got to finish that breakwater to the sand spit before the winter storms commence or we will lose every yard of that rock. Now get out there or get out of the job!"

SLANTER comes to his feet as WEST speaks. He looks at WEST with some cunning and considerable malice.

SLANTER: "I know this coast and this is against my judgment, Mr. West—but you're the boss."

15. Closeup Of WEST. He looks past the camera at SLANTER.

WEST: "I will be responsible."

16. Medium Different angle SLANTER throws down his cards and the men drink up the remnants in their glasses. They file out past WEST. SLANTER is the last to leave. He turns at the door.

17. Medium Shooting toward the door.

SLANTER: *pausing at the door*, "If you aren't careful, Mr. West, your men will leave you."

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WEST walks into the scene and faces SLANTER.

WEST: "I may lose you! This is the last time that I will stand for delays or excuses. If the work falls down once again, I'll find another night foreman."

SLANTER looks at WEST and then turns, going out of the door, which he closes.

BARKEEP's voice on sound track: "Well, you called him, Mr. West."

18. Medium *Reverse angle* including WEST in the foreground. The young man who has been lounging against the bar has spoken. He is drinking beer, which he salts carefully and to which he adds a dash of pepper.

BARKEEP: "Yeah, he didn't figure on working tonight."

WEST: "No?"

BARKEEP: "No." *Pause*. "I heard 'em down at Red's. They're planning to take it easy at night—they want to spread out the work."

WEST: "So that's it?"

Although the picture and the pantomime that it presents must give the key to the scene, the dialog integrates with the effect so that the total result will



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be a unit. Dialog must bear its share of work in the exposition of the plot and it never can become purely decorative in its function. Speeches should be as natural as possible and must fit the character that presents them. The farmer will not suddenly turn to the conversational idiom of the Bronx, nor will the city doctor make use of the phrases of a southern miner. The speech of a character will necessarily fit with his appearance and his background. In short, a rôle will be characterized by speech as well as pantomime and primary visual impression. Creating a natural, easy effect is a very difficult undertaking which requires painstaking care. One slip on the part of the dialog writer and the whole effect of the visual characterization may be spoiled. To be sure, meticulous care to insure no false note may result in producing something of a stereotype, but this is less unfortunate than it might seem. Even though the talkie has the power of speech, it does not offer the opportunity for subtlety of characterization that does the novel. It deals in stereotypes—not obvious or objectionable ones, to be sure, but they are as iron clad and as consistent as the skill of dialog writers can make them. To achieve consistency in characterization without producing a stereotype is to create real art.

The bewildering irrelevancies of actual life would wreak havoc on the screen. Since, neither on the modern stage or screen, is there a Greek chorus or

## THE TALKING PHOTOPLAY

third person to explain and justify the apparent inconsistencies of characterization, it is necessary to avoid them. In the novel, the author always may resort to the third person and, by means of a few deft sentences, he can clear up or create a world of mystery. In the case of the talkie, what the eye does not see and the ear does not hear cannot be conveyed to the audience. An aside is out of the question, and even soliloquies are not acceptable. Characterizations are revealed in the play of dialog, supported by the visual impression of appearance and pantomime.

Anybody inclined to doubt this need but study the more successful of contemporary movie productions. Consistency, fluency and the ability to produce acceptable simulacra of the currently acceptable stereotypes are the chief facilities of the successful dialog writer.

Successful writers of dialog study and restudy every utterance of their characters, seeking to eliminate inconsistencies and to insure that nothing will be included accidentally which will run counter to the effect that is being created. Ask yourself the question, "Would he (or she) say that?" Ring changes on the item of speech under consideration and *feel out* the most logical and convincing phrasing. Hold before you always the pattern of the character with which you are working.

Avoid long, set speeches and, if a lengthy dialog seems indicated on a given scene, search out ways of



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breaking the scene up into shorter shots. It may be possible that the speech can be continued on the sound track while the picture shows something else—perhaps the reactions of the character who is being addressed. Then, before the end of the speech, the scene would return to the speaker. For example:

50.     Close         WALTER leaning against the trunk of the apple tree.  
                       WALTER: "It's like spring in the apple orchard, Anne, quiet and peaceful and very white."
51.     Closeup        Of ANNE. WALTER's voice *on sound track*: "The air is clearer and you can see for miles and miles—so far that it seems that you could almost touch the mountains."
52.     Close         ANNE and WALTER seated underneath the apple tree.  
                       WALTER: "And it's a shorter trip than you'd think." *Impetuously*. "You will go with me—won't you, Anne?"

Note that the return to a shot that includes Walter talking seems to tie this incident together. At the same time this return to the scene of the speaker takes place just before his semi reverie ends and he makes a direct appeal. If, under the circumstances here suggested, Walter's plea had been heard on the

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sound track, while the audience's attention was directed visually to something else, the appeal would have less dramatic force. In fact, it is easy to conceive that any other scene than one which included a fairly close view of Walter's face, as he speaks these lines, would destroy the effect intended.

Obviously, the dramatic and emotional overtones of the camera treatment must parallel those of the dialog, for otherwise these two factors may work against each other, each one partially destroying the effect that the other tends to create. The solution of the difficulty that this brings up is found in the fact that camera positions and distances from the subject accomplish much the same thing in a talkie as in a silent film. Thus, a closeup would be used for dramatic emphasis and to call the attention of the audience to a subject or object to the exclusion of all else. Since, in this case, not only did we desire the audience to see Walter's expression but also Anne's acceptance of his plea, a camera distance was used that would include them both. In a medium shot, the facial expressions would have been lost, so a close shot or semi closeup was indicated as the most useful camera position.

It is noticeable that all the examples of talkie treatments would leave a great deal to the director and to the interpretation of the actor. This is both an efficient procedure and a desirable one. It would be practically impossible to write out the "business"



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fully and exactly and, even were it done, it still would be necessary to make adaptations and changes when the scene was rehearsed. The writer of a talkie scenario should concentrate his labors on the creation of a logical continuity and the production of convincing, natural and pleasing dialog. This is far more important than minor stage directions, exact and minute descriptions of sets (except for the purpose of keying a mood, in some instances) and detailed instructions as to gestures.

The danger that the beginning talkie script writer is most likely to encounter is writing halting, lengthy dialog that hampers the flow of the story. In the initial essays, better too little talk than too much. Assuming that the scenarist has had silent experience, he can base his thinking on this technique and, at first, work with themes that require comparatively little dialog.

## CHAPTER IX

### FILMING IN COLORS

UP to the present time at least, the non theatrical movie maker has had a remarkable advantage over his theatrical contemporary in the field of color cinematography. Three excellent processes have been the exclusive property of the amateur movie maker and the business filmer. The limitation to the non theatrical field of two of these three processes—Kodacolor and Kodachrome—has been due to the fact that, up to the present, it has been impractical to duplicate them. One print and one print only can be made and, when several copies are required, it is necessary to use several cameras. Probably this limitation will be overcome and doubtless one or more of these processes will be used in the theatrical field in time. Up to the present, however, the non theatrical field has performed a function of inestimable benefit to the whole development of the motion picture art; it has provided a proving ground and testing laboratory for these processes, and doubtless the great purchasing power of this field has made further progress economically feasible. As that may be, up to present writing, it is only in the non theatrical, amateur field that color is as freely and as efficiently used as black and white.



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Since two of the current color processes (Kodachrome and Dufaycolor) require no special equipment or lens adaptations in either camera or projector and since, in fact, these films can be exposed with any 16mm. camera and screened with any 16mm. projector, there has been nothing to hamper the full use of color in every phase of amateur movie making. The disadvantage of not being able to obtain duplicates or extra copies of the picture has, of course, been a drawback in industrial and advertising work. However, this has been solved and sometimes very successfully by the obvious expedient of repeating the same scene several times or using more than one camera.

Living, glowing color has brought to the screen psychological and esthetic advantages that scarcely can be overestimated. The newest process, amazingly faithful to nature and usable by the most untrained beginner at the art of movie making, has wrought a revolution in personal filming, while this is nothing to the change that it promises to effect in business, scientific and commercial motion picture enterprises.

Fortunately, color film with any of the processes that have been mentioned requires a technique very little different to that used in monochromatic work. Some films are slower and require larger diaphragm openings, which makes a fast lens advantageous (imperative with Kodacolor, which has been largely superseded by Kodachrome in 16mm. work). At the

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same time, the continuity treatment for the color reel is almost identical with that of the black and white picture.

Color brings additional emotional factors, the effect of which is sometimes so subtle as to be negligible. There is no doubt, however, that overall tones and shades in a given scene can be used to enhance its emotional content and that, thus, vivid, strong colors can increase the effect of commotion and restlessness, while quiet, cool tones can convey a sense of peace. Even so, the greatest effect that color has upon motion picture continuity is simply to increase its scope. With color, some scenic motifs can be handled far more powerfully, certain dramatic situations can be decorated more richly and a given characterization can be treated more forcefully. In short, color does not change the scheme of things in any particular, it simply amplifies the message that a particular scene may convey. For example, in an imaginary dramatic picture, not only will the dress of the poor people in the mountains be torn and dirty, but it will also be drab and colorless. On the other hand, bright and beautiful colors will amplify the effect of gaiety in scenes of a youngster's birthday party.

Since color attracts and holds the attention of the audience more forcibly than black and white, by the same token it makes the audience more conscious of the overall effect. For that reason, sudden and abrupt shifts in color intensity will produce a jarring note.



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If one cuts from a scene of light pastel colors to one of vivid, brilliant hues, the audience may be so aware of the shift as to destroy the illusion of naturalness. Since slight overexposure tends to weaken colors and to give a generally lighter effect on the screen, while slight underexposure darkens the tones and in some cases makes them stronger, it is not uncommon for movie makers to encounter this difficulty. If the continuity will permit, it is better to maintain the same overall color intensity throughout a sequence. Then, when a new subject appears on the screen, the effect of the shift in values will be less noticeable. If the sequences are separated by a title or a shift in musical theme, the transfer from one key to the other will be even smoother. In fact, under such circumstances, a change in color emphasis will be a welcome variation in the picture. Editors of black and white film are very careful to match the density of scenes that are to be spliced together so that a light, thin image will not follow immediately on the heels of a dark one. Color simply requires more of the same sort of care, since the change in values not only affects the amount of light that is reflected from the screen but also the color intensities.

Nevertheless, it is undesirable to produce a film of absolutely even color intensity throughout, for such a picture has a curious monotony, foreign to black and white. One continuously anticipates and looks

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for bright, satisfying colors that never come and one is left with a feeling that something is missing. Variation in color intensity from sequence to sequence is extremely advantageous. In some cases, it is desirable to provide for this in planning the picture. At first glance, this may seem a foolish caution, for isn't nature full of a variety of colors of all intensities? However, throughout a section of a picture, or even a whole picture, the cameraman may concern himself with a very limited section of nature—perhaps meadows in the springtime—which has an overall pastel effect. Too much of this material, without a sequence containing stronger, brighter notes, will create a feeling of sameness that one would scarcely notice were the picture in shades of black and white.

With all its lure and emotion compelling quality, color induces in some cameramen a partial stasis of cinematic imagination. Cinematically minded movie makers equipped with an intelligent understanding of the fact that the art of the motion picture lies, essentially, in *motion and variation in camera viewpoint* will produce one lantern slide after another, being beguiled by the entrancing color effects on the screen. Brilliant sunsets, lovely compositions of willow trees, charmingly posed girls in bright dresses, flower gardens and architectural studies will follow one after another on the screen with no concession to the essential art of cinematography.

Yet, after all, the motion picture is a motion pic-



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ture and color is merely a means to an end. If it becomes an end in itself, the cameraman will produce either an interior decorator's holiday or lantern slides on cine film.

As an antidote to this almost universal tendency, it is worth while to make oneself pointedly conscious of the need for movement in color scenes. Search out shots of action and plan sequences with a view to their cinematic quality. Make use of angles, dissolves, variation in the rate of motion and even montage. Try for symbolism, moving shadow effects and dramatic, extreme closeups. In short, treat the color picture with the same freedom and the same boldness with which you would handle the black and white medium. If you treat it like Dresden china painting and compose each scene and balance each color as in a Watteau pastoral, you may obtain ephemeral admiration but you certainly will not produce art.

An interesting world lies ahead in movie experimentation with color, for surprisingly little has been done with an eye to the true art of the motion picture. At present writing, things such as J. S. Watson's *Fall of the House of Usher* have not even been contemplated, much less undertaken, in color.

Most color work has rested its case on the obvious appeal of its static beauty and, when one has been amazed by striking and lifelike hues on the screen and the exquisite compositions that have been achieved, the story is told. Obviously, if the develop-

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ment of color is arrested at this stage, it will never integrate with the real progress of the motion picture. Fortunately, there is no evidence that this will be the case. When talkies first came to the screen, there was the same hesitation in working out a cinematic application of the new voice. Temporarily, while directors and cameramen felt their way in the mechanics of using the new facility, talkies were photographed stage plays. Much the same thing has happened with color in the non theatrical field.

But, even though the future promises automatically to rectify the present difficulty to a great extent, movie makers, and especially those new to color work, are recommended to go out of their way in the search for cinematic themes and treatments.

Color gives an additional scale of variation to the elements of the picture and provides the audience with *more things to see* than is offered by monochromatic film. For that reason, the color scene normally should run a trifle longer than the black and white standard. Exact length is a matter of tempo, a quality depending upon the picture's purpose and mood, but in general an additional foot for 16mm. or a half foot for 8mm. will provide the required extra screen time. For very short scenes, this added footage may be halved, but in any case it is safe to say that a color scene should run slightly longer than a comparable black and white shot.

Since the audience looks for more in a color pic-



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ture and expects to see a more naturalistic rendition of life, it seems to be more impatient of screen conventions and limitations. For example, in any average movie shot, it is extremely difficult to distinguish features of people further away than the middle distance. Mannerisms, dress and related nearer shots carry identities satisfactorily in black and white films, but not so happily in color pictures. One feels that he should be able to distinguish features even in distant shots, and, quite naturally in such cases, the faces of the characters are but confused little spots of color. To be sure, this difficulty is of no consequence, unless there is included in distant scenes characters upon whom audience attention is fixed. This is likely to happen in the course of things only in personal films and certain business pictures. It is a worth while caution in making films of this type to be sure to get the camera as near to the scene as possible. Avoid taking subjects in semi long shots and emphasize the use of the close shot. Remember that color is tantalizing and that, if one sees a very pretty girl in a distant shot in a color film, he will be even more eager to see her in a semi closeup than in the case of a black and white picture. This psychological fact makes the closeup and the near shot of more than customary importance in planning a color film. The solution in theatrical work to date has been to limit the scale of action to a smaller canvas. The color set has been smaller, and fewer distant scenes

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have been used. The disadvantage in this solution is the feeling of monotony and the stagelike, unreal quality that is produced. Perhaps the best solution is to handle the treatment of camera distances much as in the case of monochromatic film but to make more generous use of closeups and near views, although still including distant shots for variety.

Since, at present, non theatrical color filming is practically limited to 16mm. reversal, there is little opportunity to ornament the exposed film with optical printer effects and other printing tricks, such as the wipeoff. The cinematic devices that are to be used must be employed while the film is being exposed, for, after the film has been sent to the processing station, it can be given little additional cinematic interest except through expert editing. However, depending upon his equipment, the 16mm. color filmer has the following motion picture devices: (1) slow motion; (2) fast motion; (3) reverse motion and the simple illusions produced by stopping the camera, altering some item in the scene and then starting the camera again; (4) fade out and fade in; (5) dissolves; (6) masks and before the lens effects, including a substitute for the printed "wipe"; (7) stop motion, time condensation and animation. (8) traveling camera shots.

Certainly, there are at present far more cinematic facilities than have been thoroughly explored.

Semi slow motion, or a speed of twenty-four frames



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a second, will be found to be a valuable aid in dramatic work, topical filming and business movie making. The slight retardation gives the eye a better opportunity to grasp the color effects in scenes of complicated movement, while the usual advantage of smoothing out the movement of actors is retained.

The combined effect of motion, sound and color naturally offers the screen's most potent emotional appeal to date. In non theatrical work, it is easy to achieve the advantage of sound with a dual turntable outfit, although this does not offer the opportunity for narrative accompaniment, except in person or over a microphone. However, the combination of music and color certainly offers a rich field for cinematic experiment. Color pictures can be produced easily, and phonograph records will supply the music. Consider, for example, the possibilities of a beautiful color picture of budding apple blossoms, freshly turned earth, clear skies and new flowers synchronized with Grieg's *To the Spring*. The result of a musical and narrative accompaniment worked out in this way cannot, at present, be recorded permanently on sound film by means of post synchronization. However, movie makers who experiment with the present state of the art while it is in its formative stage will have "the jump" on their contemporaries when advance in technique brings the possibility of permanent recording and many prints.

Let the phonograph record determine the theme,

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and then catch sequences to interpret it. Abstract and symbolical treatments offer possibilities within the grasp of any movie maker.

Single perforated Kodachrome is offered for single system sound on film cameras, and consequently the treatments discussed in Chapters VII and VIII can be handled in color as well as in black and white.

Both color and music make an emotional appeal, and no movie maker who owns a modern phonograph and a selection of records is prevented from experimenting with this powerful combination, even though he cannot give the result of his work permanent form through post synchronization in studio and laboratory.

Although lighting is primarily a technical consideration that does not come within the scope of this book, color filming does bring up considerations with which one is not so much concerned in black and white work and which indirectly affect film planning. Since color gives its own modeling, when working in that medium, it is no longer necessary to manipulate lights to produce highlights and shadows that will save the picture from being "flat." Variation in color takes care of this problem, which is an ever present one if the image on the screen is presented in shades of black and white only. A number of experienced movie makers who have experimented with back and side lighting in color work are inclined to doubt this because they have noted



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that lighting for modeling has improved their results. There is no doubt but that this is true because, even on the legitimate stage where we are dealing with real figures who have real depth, effect lighting is still useful. There rarely is such a thing as entirely flat lighting on the stage, and when one stops to consider just how complicated are the combinations of footlights, overhead strips, side spots and the numerous other types of illumination, he will see that the legitimate stage, even although it has the advantage of three dimensions, makes use of about as involved lighting as does the studio producing a theatrical movie.

However, this does not affect the fundamental fact that, in color movies, color itself will take care of the basic requirements in producing natural modeling in two dimensions. One can make a subject "stand out" in color with a flat lighting that in black and white would plaster the subject against the wall and make his every feature seem to occupy a single plane. One has only to film a flat lighting setup in color and then in black and white to demonstrate this. However, "effect lighting"—side lighting, spot lighting and back lighting—still is extremely useful in color filming, almost as important as in black and white work. They simply serve wider purposes—purposes that are much the same as those that they serve on the legitimate stage. Lighting in color films can emphasize details, concentrate attention on a portion of

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a set or a character's face, completely change the effect of the scene. In short, the color filmer can learn much more from the lighting on the legitimate stage than can the black and white movie maker. He has a new world to conquer, but one which he will not grasp if his concept of lighting is chained to the principles that were necessarily evolved in an effort to give a two dimensional black and white world the illusion of depth.

It is this extension in the field of lighting and the increased subtlety within its scope when applied to color filming that makes it a proper consideration for a discussion of film continuity. By the manipulation of colored lights, one can effect a new type of fade out and a different means of emphasizing elements within a scene. Warm lighting and cold lighting will have a psychological effect on the audience and, as has been proved on the stage, the effect of sets can be revolutionized by the direction and the tone of the illumination.

In outdoor shooting, transmitted light—the principles of which have been thoroughly investigated by John V. Hansen, the color filmer—plays an important rôle. With this type of lighting, translucent flower petals and the iridescent green of new leaves can be presented in their natural beauty. In preparing film plans or completed scripts for scenic pictures, this facility should be kept in mind, just as other potentialities of the motion picture medium,



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if one intends to take full advantage of his opportunities.

The latest motion picture color processes require no special lenses or filters for projection, and consequently color strips can be spliced in among black and white sequences, or vice versa. Giving the ultimate in flexibility to the movie maker, this flexibility also poses an esthetic hazard: is it desirable to plunge one's audience into a black and white world after it has been accustomed to pictures in full color? On the whole, it would seem that the best procedure would be to make one's picture either entirely black and white or entirely color. Certainly this is safe. However, movie makers, using both mediums, sometimes want to eke out their color films with black and white sequences. A workable solution of the problem is to confine the shift from one to the other to the changes in sequence. A single color scene in a black and white sequence is bound to stand out in no relationship to the material before or after its appearance. However, if the shift occurs after a title and with the introduction of a new subject, it is not so objectionable.

Human beings are peculiarly suspicious of the artistic gifts of a mechanical civilization and are prone to exalt the esthetic value of any means of expression achieved by laborious handicrafts as against one accomplished through the aid of any mechanical device. It is not surprising, then, that critics should

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look on motion picture color with a jaundiced eye and cry that it may be beautiful but it is not natural. Yet, in comparison with most other modern forms of art, the color motion picture is conspicuously and almost anachronistically natural. In fact, its one weakness is that it is too natural. It concentrates on a screen, in a darkened room, manifestations of nature that the unobservant rarely note in real life.<sup>1</sup> This very fact is the principal source of material for its detractors. Those who have never noted that the low, late afternoon sun casts a yellow and almost red light with a complete change in the color of, for example, a gray brick building, may be surprised to note this very effect infallibly presented on the screen. Those who have not seen that winter shadows on white snow are often blue and even deep purple in tone may be disposed to deny that such things can be, while, if the color of a girl's face is not identical in two successive scenes, they may claim that nature was never thus, ignoring the fact that the play of light will completely change the delicate shades of human flesh. In truth, the "natural world" to many

<sup>1</sup> Note: John V. Hansen, who has won international fame with his 16mm. color work, makes the point that there is an inevitable psychological factor involved in the presentation of color movies that may lead the less observant astray as to true color values. On the screen, we have a section of reality that is completely bordered with darkness, while in real life we are accustomed to see the same or a similar scene with light and color on all sides of it. He believes that the ideal color movie is one which would not make the audience conscious of its color.



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is a strange succession of stereotypes culled out of a thoroughly filtered memory. As one eminent movie maker has already prophesied, color cinematography will induce an amazing consciousness of the colors of our surroundings. Because of our surprise at what we see on the screen, we may be encouraged to *see* what we see.

## GLOSSARY

**Angle.** *See camera angle.*

**"Build up."** A series of scenes or sequences that create suspense or stimulate the interest of the audience in preparation for a climactic shot or sequence.

**Camera angle.** Used frequently as a synonym for camera viewpoint but specifically referring to any variation in camera position from the horizontal. Such shifts in the angle of viewpoint are used for emphasis and sometimes merely for decorative variety.

**Cinematic.** Having those essential qualities of a motion picture which distinguish it from other methods of presenting a story.

**Close shot.** A compromise between a closeup and a medium shot. *See semi closeup.*

**Closeup.** A scene made close enough to a human subject so that only his head and shoulders are included in the frame. Loosely used to indicate any relatively close scene. For example, in a closeup of a hand, the hand would nearly fill the frame. *Ultra closeup* is sometimes used to designate an even nearer camera position, for example, a scene of a butterfly on a flower.

**Comedy relief.** A comic or farcical situation or character introduced for the purpose of breaking the mounting tension of a plot so that it will not reach too high a peak before the climax.

**Continuity.** The technique of telling a story in motion pictures; the relationship of scenes and sequences to each other and to the theme of the picture.

**Cue.** In post synchronization, that portion of a scene, the appearance of which is a signal for a sound effect, a change in music or the resumption of the narration.

**Cueing.** Selecting cues for post synchronization or following cues during the operations of post recording.



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**Cue sheet.** A list of cues for post recording, which has been prepared with a parallel list of notations of sound effects, music and narration.

**Cut.** To end a scene by stopping the camera; also to edit film.

**Dissolve.** A simultaneous fade out of one scene and fade in of another. As one image grows fainter, the other image brightens. Hence, at the middle of a dissolve, momentarily the images of both scenes are recorded equally on the film, but both are present at half strength. As the light from one scene diminishes, the light from a second increases, and so the image of the latter gradually replaces that of the former.

**Double system sound camera.** A camera which registers the picture on one film strip in synchronism with a recorder which registers the sound track on another film strip. The two negatives are combined in printing.

**Double turntable system.** Two phonograph turntables connected through electrical pickups with one amplifier and usually equipped with a fading and mixing panel which permits the operator to play part of one record and then to fade into a second, which has been running on the other turntable. Such outfits may be home made.

**Editing.** The process of rearranging, shortening or eliminating scenes in a motion picture after the film has been exposed and developed.

**Fade in.** The gradual appearance on the screen of a scene from blackness. The reverse of fade out.

**Fade out.** The gradual darkening of a scene by cutting down the light admitted to the film while it is being run through the camera. This is done: (1) by moving a fading glass in front of the lens; (2) by closing down the shutter opening; (3) by chemical treatment of a film strip; (4) by controlling the printer light in the case of negative and positive.

**"Faking."** In motion pictures, to represent, in its proper sequence, action that could not be filmed as it actually occurred; or even to represent scenes as being filmed at the

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same time or place, that actually were filmed on different occasions.

**Film narrative.** *See narration.*

**Iris in.** The reverse of an *iris out*.

**Iris out.** Closing a scene by holding in front of the lens a device which gradually contracts the view into a circle that narrows down to a point and disappears. This effect may also be gained by trick printing, in negative and positive work.

**Lecture films.** As here used, a motion picture which has been planned and edited to be presented in combination with a lecture or discussion given in person.

**Lip synchronization.** Sound recorded directly from the scene that is being photographed, and in perfect synchronism with the picture of the action. The expression was first applied to scenes in which the actors' lips are seen to move in exact synchronism with the sound of their voices.

**Long shot.** A distant view which could include extended action, as in a scene of a car driving along a country road; vistas in scenic filming.

**Medium shot.** A scene which includes human subjects at full length yet which is close enough so that facial expressions are plainly discernible; the standard shot in scenic or news filming, which usually includes nearly all of the subject featured.

**Mix.** *See dissolve.*

**Mixing.** Controlling sound coming through two or more microphones so that their effect will be combined smoothly on the film.

**Montage.** A series of very short shots or flashes which combine to produce suspense or create an intense atmosphere. Studied slowly, the individual scenes in the series may seem to be disconnected but, following one another quickly on the screen, they combine to create a unified effect. They may furnish the setting for an episode that will follow or they may "comment on" an incident that has preceded. Since a vague, but very exciting, effect can be pro-



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duced by a series of short, related flashes that are cut to produce a mounting tempo, various esoteric cinematic theories were evolved a decade ago with reference to montage. These are entertaining but have proved to be of no practical importance.

**Narration.** A lecture or discussion prepared to be synchronized with a motion picture.

**Narrator.** The person who writes the comments for a post synchronized film; also, the person who reads them into the microphone.

**Negative.** A master film in which black and white tone values are reversed. The negative and positive process in movie making is comparable to the same process in still photography.

**Panorama ("Pan").** Swinging the camera horizontally, as on a pivot.

**Parallel action.** Action which is presented as occurring at the same time as action which has been shown in the previous scene. For example, the heroine is trapped by the flames and the hero is coming to her rescue. The first shot shows the heroine seeking a way out in the smoke and the second shot shows the hero racing up the stairs. Scenes of the two people are alternated until the rescue. The two sets of scenes are represented as occurring in the same periods of time. *Parallel action* also refers to the presentation of a minor incident or subject which parallels or parodies a major one. For example, after having been given up for lost, the hero escapes from the jungle and, reaching home, rushes to his wife and child. His servant rushes home too, but to see if his cache of whisky is intact.

**Participation shot.** A scene made from the point of view of a character in the incident or story that is being pictured. The camera is placed in the position of the character, records the scene as he would see it. The character must be established in preceding scenes, so that the audience will recognize the significance of the scene made from his point of view.

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**Positive.** A film print in which black and white values parallel those of the actual scene. *See negative.*

**Post recording.** *See post synchronized films.*

**Post synchronized films.** Motion pictures to which sound (music, narrative or sound effects) has been added after the film has been exposed, developed and, at least, partly edited. Thus silent motion pictures, either 16mm. or 35mm., may be turned into talking motion pictures in the laboratory. The music or lecture is recorded on a separate sound track, and the picture and the sound track are synchronously printed together on a new negative. Most theatrical newsreels are post synchronized. In fact, the newsreel commentator speaks into the microphone as he views a print of the picture to which his voice is being added. Laboratories are prepared to post record 16mm. movies. Silent films which are to be post recorded should be shot at twenty four frames a second.

**Reaction shot.** A scene which portrays human emotion that has been produced by action which was presented in the scene immediately preceding. For example, in one scene the heroine sees her fiancé crash in a car wreck, and the following shot is a closeup of the girl's face showing her reaction of horror.

**Rear projection.** Projection of a motion picture image from the rear on a translucent screen which permits the image to be seen from the front. This is done in studio productions to provide realistic moving backgrounds for sets, when it would be too expensive or difficult to transport the actors to the desired location. The motion picture background is photographed simultaneously with the actors in the foreground. Attention is usually centered in the foreground so that the audience will not study the slightly unreal quality of the background.

**Reversal process.** A laboratory procedure which makes it possible to reverse the values of the negative into a positive on the same film strip on which the picture was originally photographed. Thus, only one length of film is re-



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quired to secure a finished picture, ready for projection. It is this process with its consequent economy that has made 8mm. and 16mm. movie making a major hobby and an important business and educational aid. (Negative and positive require two films—one on which the picture is taken in the camera and a second, which is printed from the first.)

**Reverse angle.** A shift in camera position to a viewpoint the opposite of that used in photographing the preceding scene. This technique is used particularly in portraying conversations in both silent and talkie pictures.

**Scenario.** A list of scenes embodying a motion picture interpretation of a story or idea. In dramatic movies, the word refers to a list of scenes with camera instructions, directorial notes, set descriptions, property notations, descriptions of the action in each scene, titles, and dialogue or narrative, all of which has been prepared as a complete written guide for a motion picture.

**Scenarization.** Writing a scenario.

**Semi closeup.** A scene close enough to include one or more human figures from the waist up.

**Semi long shot.** A compromise between a medium shot and a long shot. In long shots, it is usually impossible to detect facial expressions, but characters can be recognized by costume and manner.

**Sequence.** A series of scenes concerning one general subject; a subtopic treated in a series of related scenes; an episode or incident in a plot film which requires more than one scene. The sequence is analogous to a paragraph in writing.

**Single system sound camera.** A talkie camera with which sound and picture are recorded on the same strip of film. In the case of 16mm. the sound track replaces one row of perforations.

**Synchronized films.** Films to which music, narrative or sound effects have been added. *See post synchronized films.*

## GLOSSARY

**Talkie.** Any motion picture with which speech or other sound has been recorded synchronously.

**Tilting.** Swinging the camera vertically, as on a pivot.

**"Tip off."** To anticipate the subject matter of a scene by describing it in a title, or in narration, before the scene itself appears on the screen.

**Traveling camera.** Moving the camera forward or backward to follow action or to focus the attention of the audience on some subject or incident.

**Treatment.** A full synopsis of a story or plot which has been prepared as a preliminary to scenarization or for the purpose of judging whether the material would make a good motion picture or not. A treatment is an adaptation of the story or idea in a brief form, in which phases that could not be presented in motion pictures are eliminated and in which is included material that would be required to make the story or idea clear in a motion picture.

**Trucking shot.** *See traveling camera.*

**Wipeoff (wipeover).** A shift from one scene to another, in which the second scene displaces the first on the screen by appropriating gradually the area that it occupied. The second scene, which may start in any geometrical form, grows in size and seems to push the first scene off the screen. The new scene may slide in from one side or it may start at any point or points within the screen area and, as it grows, it may take any form until it has expanded to displace the first scene completely. Of course, the whole operation must be confined within the area of the motion picture frame. These effects usually are produced in the laboratory by means of traveling masks used in printing. A simple form of wipe can be made with cellulose tape. For permanence, it is necessary to have the footage of cellulose tape wipes duplicated before it is damaged by projection.



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